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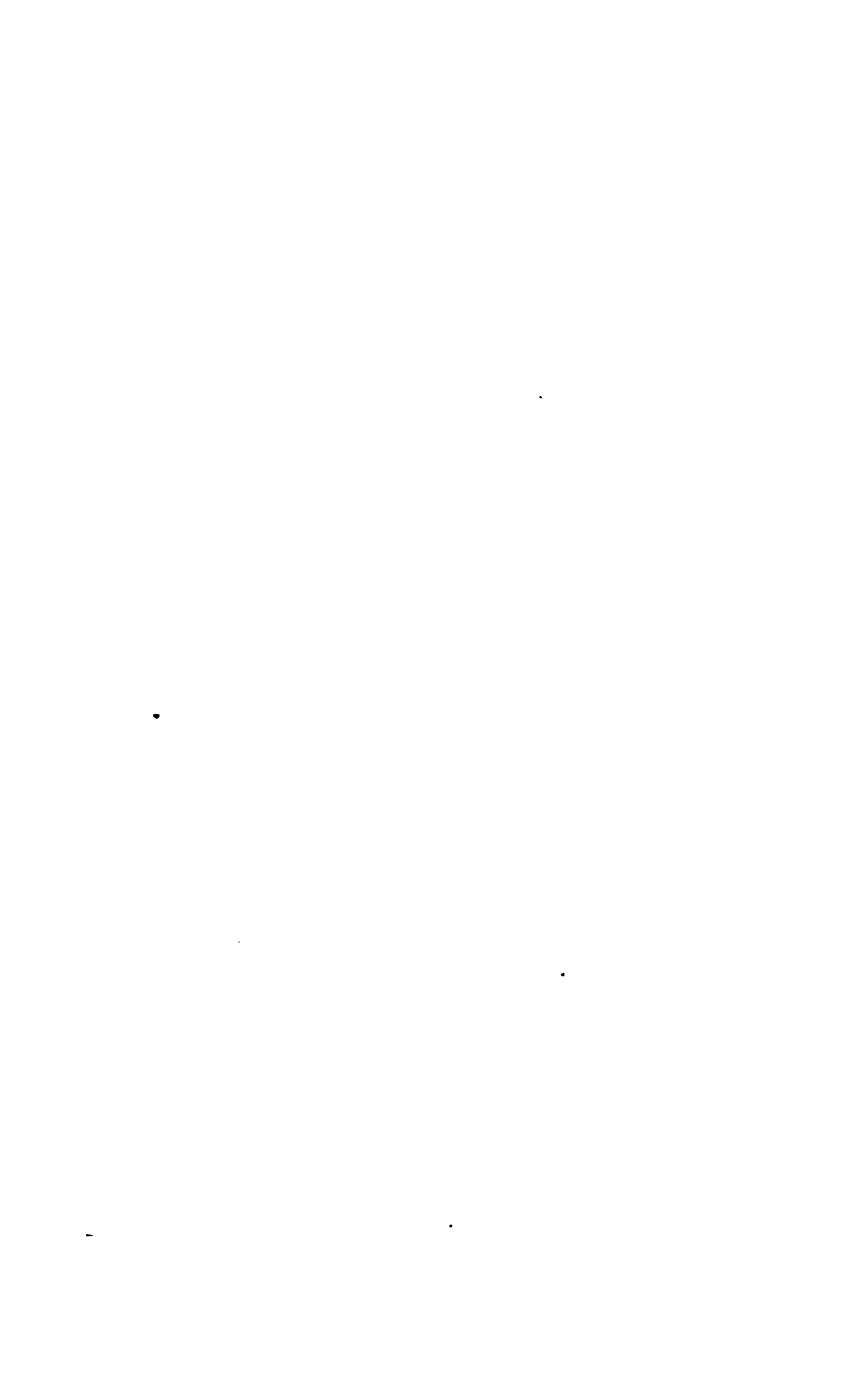
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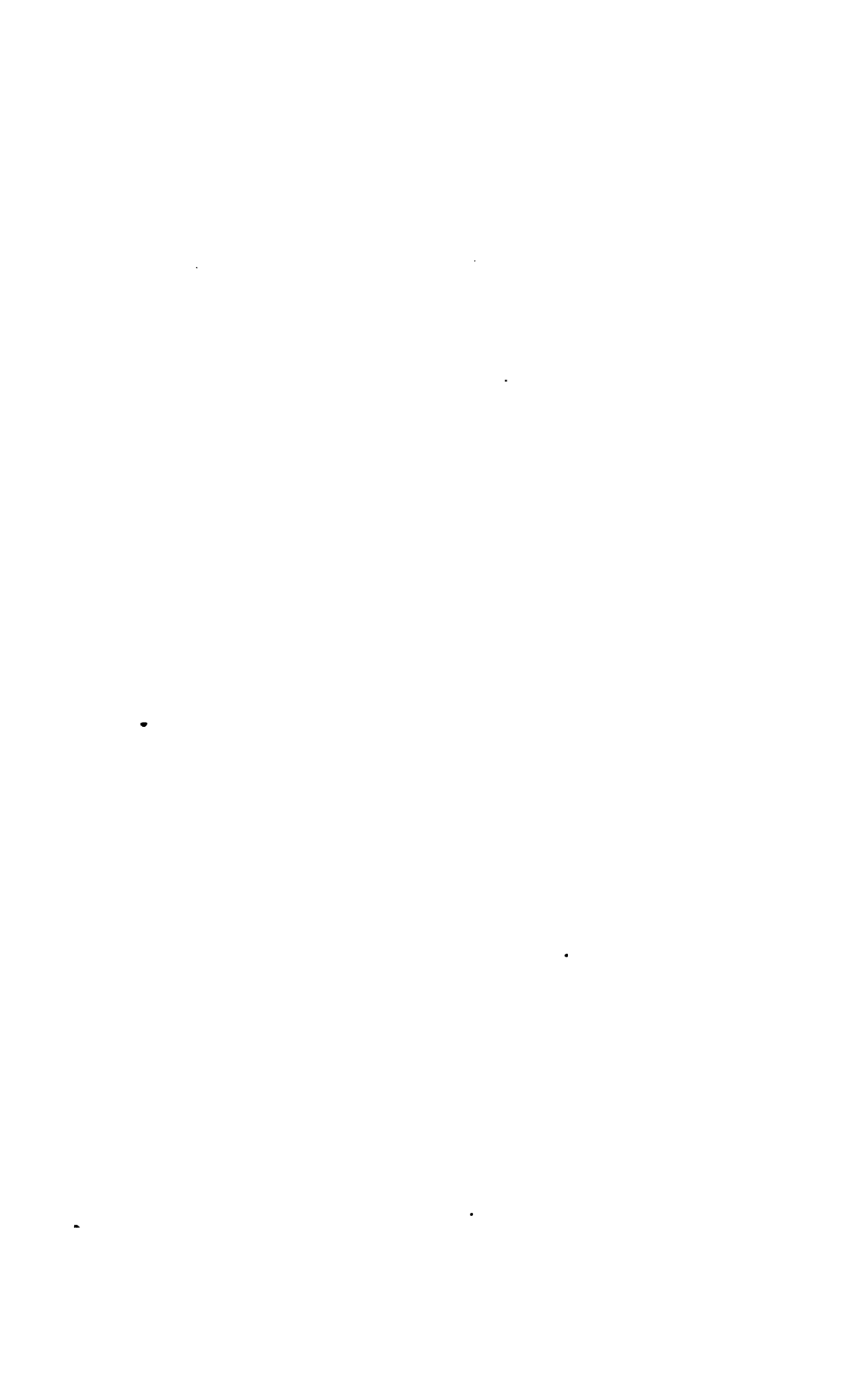
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A

COMMENTARY

ON

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

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A

COMMENTARY,

EXPOSITORY AND PRACTICAL,

ON

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

BY



ALEXANDER S. PATTERSON,

MINISTER OF HUTCHESONTOWN FREE CHURCH,
GLASGOW.

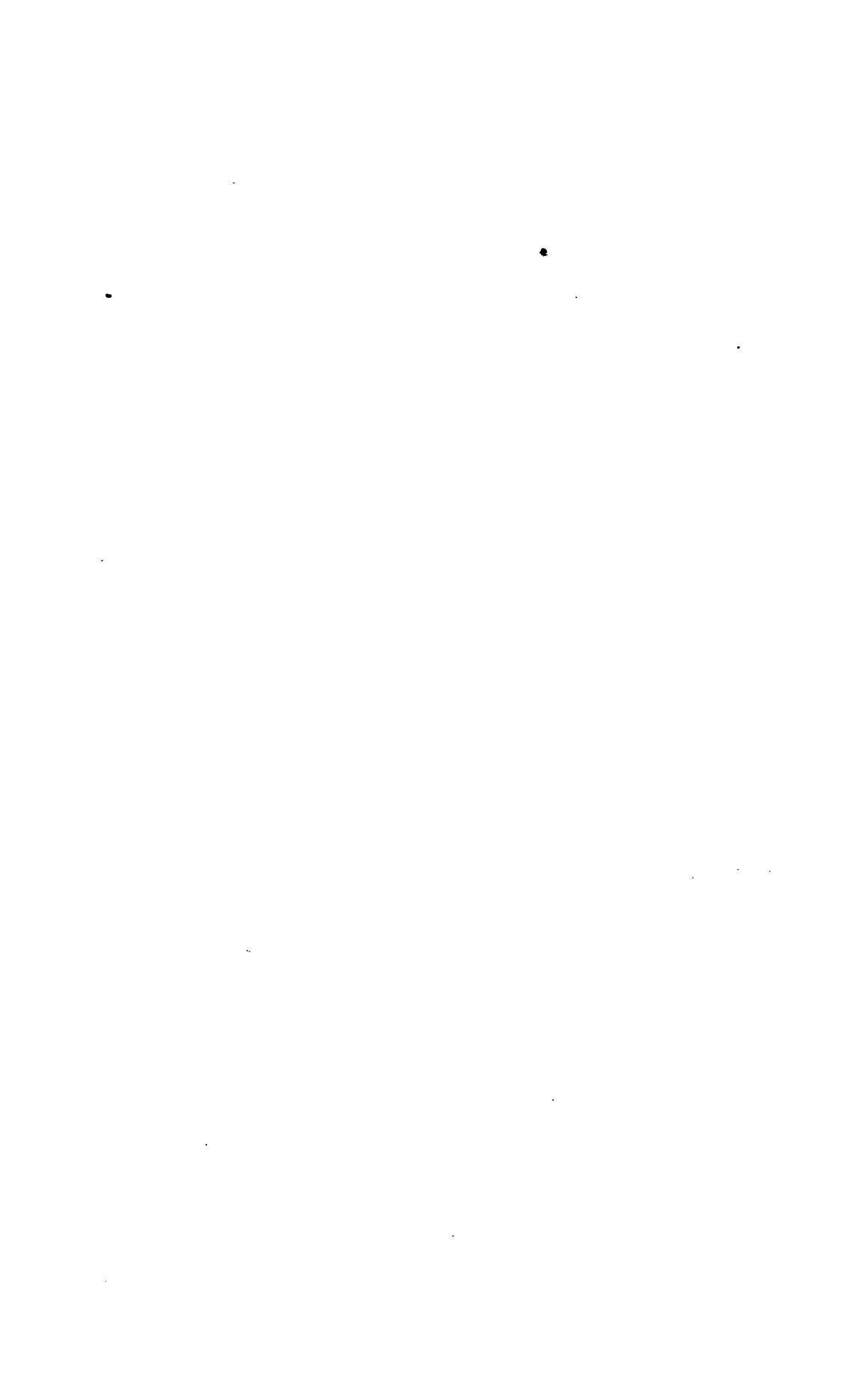
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P R E F A C E.

IN the *Conversations* of S. T. Coleridge, that eminent, though not always judicious, thinker is represented as suggesting that, on the supposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews not being the production of St. Paul, the weight of the Christian testimony would be enhanced instead of lessened. Without denying that this idea is a somewhat doubtful one, I certainly hold that the Canonical authority of that Epistle does not altogether depend on the question, Whether or not it was written by St. Paul. There are several Books of the Old Testament the human authority of which is a matter uncertain and unknown — while yet their Canonical authority and Divine inspiration are explicitly determined by apostolic testimony and, indeed, by that of Christ himself. This kind of evidence is wanting in the case of the Epistle to the Hebrews. But, independently of the question as to St. Paul's having written it,—its strict and pervading accordance with unquestionably apostolic writings, its intellectual and moral majesty, its vast and manifest superiority to the uninspired remains of Christian antiquity, and the early,

general, and ultimately catholic, acceptance and recognition of it in the Church as Canonical Scripture, are quite sufficient to determine its right to be received as a Divinely authoritative Book.

The last of these considerations, however, is intimately associated with the question as to the Pauline authorship of the Epistle. And on that interesting question, thus the matter stands:—Although for four hundred years after it was written it was not received by the Roman Church as the composition of St. Paul, yet, during that time, in the Churches for which it seems to have been more immediately intended, and, indeed, in all the Churches of the world except the Latin, it was acknowledged as the production of that apostle; its Pauline authorship ultimately became acknowledged by the Latin Church itself; as in respect of doctrine, so also in respect of phraseology and style—as is shown by Spanheim, and by Owen in his *First Exercitation* on the Epistle—there is a remarkably striking resemblance in this production to the usual composition of St. Paul; the references, in the Epistle, to Italy, to Timothy, and to the author's imprisonment, point in the same direction; and the frequent, and even pervading, peculiarity of style—which was early alleged as a reason for calling in question its Pauline authorship—may be accounted for by these three considerations—(1.) That, though called an Epistle, this production is obviously of the nature of a Treatise; (2.) That as it was probably to Hebrews residing in Palestine, that it was

originally addressed, St. Paul may have modified his style accordingly; and (3.) That on the style of St. Paul, as on that of other authors, a considerable change may have passed in the course of an interval of years.

Although, in the present Commentary, I have refrained from dogmatically speaking of St. Paul as the human author of the Epistle, I hold the evidence now so slightly glanced at amply sufficient to prove that it is the production of that great apostle. The question is discussed, with admirable learning, comprehensiveness, and candour, by the late Moses Stuart of Andover, in the Introduction to his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. I agree with the same erudite author in holding that several references in the Epistle itself go far to establish, that it was addressed to Jews residing in Palestine while the service of the Temple was still observed.

It is in accordance with the suggestion of friends, and at the solicitation of an intelligent and esteemed member of my Congregation—who has interested himself in the matter to an extent which calls for my warm acknowledgements—that I have consented to publish on this noble Book of the New Testament. I recently lectured on it in the course of my ordinary ministrations; and the Commentary which I now permit to see the light is, to a great extent, the substance of what was addressed, from week to week, to my own flock. Into the printed work, however, I have considered it reasonable and right to introduce a few short

critical discussions which would have been out of place in the Pulpit.

With the present unworthy attempt to expound and apply a rich and precious portion of God's word may He himself vouchsafe his enlightening and sanctifying grace.

A. S. P.

27th February, 1856.

COMMENTARY

ON THE

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

CHAPTER I.

1. *God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,*
2. *Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.*

Thus nobly commences the Epistle to the Hebrews. The comprehensive statement of these verses may be resolved into three specific propositions.

I. "God," says the sacred writer, "at sundry times," or rather, in many parts, (*πολυμερῶς*,) "spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets."

"God spake." He to whom all truth and knowledge appertain—He who embraces in the range of his unerring vision whatever has been, is, or yet shall be—He "whose faithfulness is in the heavens, and whose truth reacheth to the clouds"—having constituted man, from the beginning, an intellectual, moral, and responsible being, addressed him, as in later, so in earlier ages, on matters of transcendent interest. As, in the days of innocence, He aided man's pure and unperverted reason by express revelations of his mind

and will, conversing with Adam amidst the happy haunts of Paradise; so, after innocence had fled, to man, in his ignorance and guilt and ruin, the Voice of eternal truth and mercy deigned to utter monitory, and even animating, words. Man's mind was dark, but Jehovah poured celestial light upon the soul. An awful question had arisen, "How shall man," the rebel and the reprobate, "be just with God?" and He who alone was able kindly chose to answer it.

The "times past" during which God is here described as having spoken, extended from the giving of the law to the days of Malachi. He had spoken, indeed, from the very beginning of the world, and very remarkable and precious were many of the revelations which He gave in patriarchal times. But the specification of "the prophets" as those by whom He spake, and the obvious design of the sacred writer to compare and contrast the Jewish with the Christian revelation, may be viewed as limiting the period spoken of to that during which the Jewish seers had prophesied—a period extending to a thousand years and more. "The fathers," accordingly, were the Jews who lived during that long succession of ages. In the prophetic writings, however, even later Jews—those who lived between the time of Malachi and that of Christ—virtually heard the oracular voice of God. "The prophets" were the plenarily inspired messengers whom the God of Israel qualified and commissioned to warn the chosen nation of their danger, to rebuke them for their sins, to urge them to repentance, and to point them forwards to the advent of a great Deliverer. The Greek preposition used in the expression here rendered, "by the prophets" (*ἐν*), has been supposed to define the phrase, "the prophets," as

meaning *the prophetic books*. But the antithetical relation of the whole expression to the succeeding one translated, "by the Son," in which the same Greek preposition is employed, shows that the *persons* of the prophets are meant. That preposition, in the sense of *by*, may be considered as used Hellenistically. But, sooth to say, it is occasionally thus employed by native Greek writers,—for example, by Thucydides, (vii. 11). The compound adverb rendered, "at sundry times," properly denotes *in many portions*, and here indicates the fact that the Old Testament revelation was not all given out by God at once—that, in adaptation to the particular conditions, capacities, and wants of the people at different times and in different places—it was in a succession and variety of parts that this revelation was vouchsafed. The expression, "in diverse manners," was realized in the earlier revelation made to Israel by God, both by the fact that it was in various methods, such as visions, voices, and angelic interventions, that "God spake," and by the fact that what He announced consisted of various kinds of truth, such as precept, threatening, and promise.

Most certainly the sacred writer does not mean to suggest that the Divine manifestation which he here represents as given aforetime to the fathers was unimportant. The tenor of this very Epistle makes it manifest that he highly prized the oracles of ancient Scripture; and that to the Jews those oracles were given, St. Paul explicitly declares to have been a noble privilege, (Rom. iii. 1, 2). To *them*, before the advent of the Son, very precious were the words which their glorious Guide and Protector "spake;" and to *us*, in these later ages, the Jewish Scriptures should be

pleasant and profitable still. But it is obviously in the form of contrast, as well as comparison, that the sacred writer enunciates the next proposition of the passage.

II. "God," he says, the very God who made the earlier revelation, "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."

The prophets, in their fleeting generations, passed away. The human voices that had spoken had long been silent, the human hands that had delivered Heaven's oracles to men had long been motionless. But He who had inspired and animated both eternally survived. He who spake to Adam spake to Abraham: He who spake to Abraham spake to Moses: He who spake to Moses spake to Elijah: He who spake to Elijah spake to Isaiah: He who spake to Isaiah spake to Malachi: He who spake to Malachi spake to Christ. To each and all of these the Immutable and Everlasting One committed truth to be proclaimed to man; by each and all of them He poured it forth in streams of living water on the world.

The statement, in this second proposition, that "God hath spoken," manifestly refers to the Christian gospel and the Christian law. By the associated statements, the sacred writer means to intimate that that gospel and this law are pre-eminently excellent and precious. This worth and dignity might easily be traced in their essential character, and in their admirable adaptation to the intellectual and spiritual wants of man. Their light, how clear! Their revelations, how sublime! Their tone, how exquisite! Their tendency, how practical! Their influence, how sacred and how sweet! But here the apostle specifies more particularly the time *at which*, and the person *by whom*, God gave this later revelation to the children of those "fathers" to whom He had

spoken in the days of old. The one is denoted by the phrase, "in these last days;" which certainly is meant to identify the termination of the Jewish epoch: and the other is specified in the words, "by His Son;" where, as the illustration given in ver. 4-6 makes manifest, the Sonship of Christ is to be taken in its highest sense, or, at least, in a sense by which He is contradistinguished, not only from the saints of earth, but also from the angels of heaven.

Angels and saints are themselves, in Scripture, called sons or children of God, (Job xxxviii. 7; John i. 12; Rom. viii. 14, 16, 21; &c.) But, The Son, The Son of God, God's own Son, and God's only-begotten Son, are names which are there applied to Christ, and to Christ alone, (John i. 18, 34; iii. 18, 35, 36; v. 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26; Rom. viii. 3, 32; &c.) In respect of his incarnation, Christ was specifically and peculiarly the Son of God:—"The Holy Ghost," said the angel of the nativity to the virgin-mother, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God," (Luke i. 35). But, even as God, Christ is represented as the Father's Son. An eternal relation, corresponding to that between parent and child, is indicated by the interrogation, (Prov. xxx. 4):—"What is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?" When Christ called himself the Son of God, the Jews accused Him of blasphemy, saying that He had "made himself equal to God," nor is there any evidence that Jesus sought to disabuse them of the interpretation which they had put upon His words, (John v. 17, 18). A relation corresponding to Sonship is clearly denoted by the name,

“The Word,” in that memorable text, John i. 1. God is said to have *given*, and to have *sent* His Son, and this fact is set forth as a marvellous manifestation of the Divine love, (John iii. 16; 1 John iv. 9, 10). Finally, in the third verse of this chapter, the sacred writer virtually explains the title “The Son,” by representing Him who bears it as “the brightness of God’s glory, and the express image of his hypostasis.” It was by this pre-eminently glorious One that Christianity was ushered in. Not only did the apostles, his ambassadors and representatives, announce it to the world; but He himself, personally, went about among the sons of men declaring it. O how should such a messenger of truth and mercy, and how should a religion given by God through the direct instrumentality of his own eternal and incarnate Son, be valued, welcomed, and embraced! To enforce this lesson the more, the sacred writer proceeds to a magnificent description of that Son of God by whom the Father had spoken to the later Hebrews; and part of this description occurs in the second verse.

III. The Son is thus described:—“Whom God hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds.”

It is manifestly of Christ as Mediator that the sacred writer makes the former of these two statements; and, indeed, the idea of Christ’s mediatorial person must be kept up throughout the whole of the description. As Divine, Christ was essentially and absolutely proprietor of all things; but, as Mediator, He was “appointed” heir, or possessor, of the universe by God. As such, He was “set by God at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality,

and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come," (Ephes. i. 21). The Father "has put all things under his feet, and given Him to be head over all things to the Church," (Ephes. i. 22). "The government is on the shoulders" of the "Child born," of the "Son given," to man, (Isa. ix. 6). He "hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords," (Rev. xix. 16). It is required that "things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, should bow to Christ," and that "every tongue should confess that He is Lord," (Philip. ii. 10, 11). As Messiah has a vast dominion, so over it He has entire supremacy. To Him pertain "the keys of hell and of death," (Rev. i. 18). He "openeth and no man shutteth," He "shutteth and no man openeth," (Rev. iii. 7). Already He owns the property, and administers the affairs, of this great universe; and certainly the word translated "heir," (*κληρονόμος*), may denote present possession. But still, in one sense, "we see not yet all things put under Christ" as mediatorial Lord, (chap. ii. 8). A large portion even of the world to which He brought the overtures of peace is up in arms against Him. But the work of subjugation must be at length fulfilled. He is entering now, and will hereafter enter gloriously, on his complete and eternal triumph. He is still, in the strict and literal sense of the word, an "heir;" but his heirdom is real, his heritage is sure. The appointment to the mediatorial sovereignty, and the past, present, and future investiture of Jesus with the vast immunities denoted by the expression, "heir of all things," are habitually attributed to God. "*He* set Christ at his

own right hand," (Ephes. i. 20.) "*He* hath highly exalted Him," (Philip. ii. 9.) "*He* hath given Him a name that is above every name," (Philip. ii. 9). "*He* gave Him to be head over all things," (Ephes. i. 22). "*He* hath put all things under His feet," (Heb. ii. 8). "Ask of me," says the Father, "and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession," (Psalm ii. 8). "Jehovah said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool," (Psalm cx. 1). Thus does the Father recompense the toils and sufferings of his incarnate Son. Thus does He provide that, in spite of those toils and sufferings, nay, because of them, Jesus shall be honoured to the utmost limits of the universe. Thus does He secure, that He whose soul was "exceeding sorrowful," whose hands and feet were pierced with nails, and whose head was crowned with thorns, should himself confer on his believing followers the glories which for *them*, in common with himself, He won.

The sacred writer declares still further, that "by his Son God made the worlds." The fact that here the Greek preposition ($\delta\iota\alpha$) governs the genitive ($ο\upsilon$), not the accusative, makes it perfectly certain that the expression means, *by whom*, not, *for whose sake*. The distinction between these two relations of the preposition here used—habitually recognized in Greek composition—is clearly exemplified in chap. ii. 10. The word here rendered "worlds," occasionally means, ages; and there are interpreters who think that here the idea is, *by Him He constituted the ages*. Even in this view, considering that the constitution of all the past ages of the world by ($\delta\iota\alpha$) Christ, implies that He existed before those ages

began to roll; and considering also that "the ages" must, in this case, be understood to include the historical events with which the successive eras of the world were filled, the pre-existence and divinity of Christ appear. But the analogy of chap. xi. 3, "We understand that the worlds (τοὺς αἰῶνας) were framed by the word of God," if not also the way in which the word is habitually used in old Jewish writings, is decidedly in favour of retaining the sense of "worlds." By the Son the Father built the universe. Surely, then, the Son is God. For thus Jehovah speaks:—"I am the Lord, that stretcheth forth the heavens *alone*, and spreadeth abroad the earth *by myself*," (Isa. xlv. 24). But in other passages the part taken by Christ in the work of creation is still more emphatically specified. "By Him (ἐν αὐτῷ) were all things created," (Col. i. 16). "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made," (John i. 3). And if, in this latter text, it should be suggested that the instrumentality of a mere creature may be meant, the answer is at hand. (1). If all creatures were made by Him, how can He himself be a creature? (2). How could God make the world by a creature, if He did it "alone," and "by himself?" (3). Thus is the statement ushered in:—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The statement, then, "By Him God made the worlds," may be viewed as bringing out an additional, and, in some sense, a crowning and consummating view of the glory and dignity of Him by whom, in later times, Jehovah spake. But, as associated with the statement, "God hath appointed Him heir of all things," it may also serve to show how so

high a prerogative could be assigned to the mediatorial Christ, and to guard against the representation of his appointment to that prerogative by the Father being misconstrued or misapplied. This latter object is, if possible, still more effectually gained by the remaining part of the description, as contained in ver. 3, 4.

3. Who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; 4. Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

There is here a continuation, or expansion, of the description given of Christ in ver. 2. This part of the description embraces three successive particulars. It sets forth the essential majesty, the expiatory sacrifice, and the mediatorial exaltation, of Jesus Christ.

I. He is represented as "being the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person," and as "upholding all things by the word of his power."

It is observable, first of all, that this character of Christ was not superinduced on his sacerdotal sacrifice or on his ascension into heaven. It was prior to both. This is indicated by the participial forms, "being" and "upholding."

The original phrase rendered, "the brightness of his glory," (*ἀπαυγασμα τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ*.) denotes an effluence or effulgence bursting from a brilliant light. It has been supposed that there is here a reference to the Shekinah, or Indwelling Glory, of the temple, and that, thus early in his letter, the writer means to indicate the prefigurative character of the objects included in that sacred

house. More probably the sun, and the irradiation by which it is made manifest, are meant. It was perhaps from this part of the description that the custom, so frequent in the early Church, of comparing the relation between the first and the second Persons of the Trinity to that between the sun and the light which it emits, arose. One example of that mode of illustration occurs in the Nicene Creed:—"Light of Light, very God of very God." The expression translated "the express image of his person," (*χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ*), is also very forcible and striking. It denotes the exact impression, the precise counterpart, of Jehovah's essence. The twofold representation, taken together, comprehends the three ideas of resemblance, manifestation, and majesty.

A mere man may certainly be said to resemble God. At the first, "God made man in his own image," (Gen. i. 26, 27). In the case of the regenerate, that now forfeited image is restored, (Ephes. iv. 24; Col. iii. 10). Men are called to be "followers"—imitators (*μιμηταί*)—"of God, as dear children," (Ephes. v. 1). And, in respect of his immaculate and perfect human excellence, Jesus, assuredly, was like to God. But if it be true—as, by such a multitude of texts, and in such a variety of ways, it is satisfactorily proved to be—that Christ is God; if the fact that Divine attributes and operations are habitually attributed to him in the Sacred Writings, and that there, both in the Old Testament and in the New, the one Jehovah's characteristic names are given Him, establishes, as it fully does, the doctrine of his true Divinity (Isa. ix. 6; John i. 1; Rom. ix. 5; Tit. ii. 13; Heb. i. 8, 9; Rev. i. 10, 11; &c.); then, taking that doctrine as proved, the interpreter is both warranted and required to under-

stand, by Christ being "the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his essence," a likeness far more essential and transcendental than merely that which Jesus, as a perfect man, bears to the infinitely perfect God. And assuredly, were there no other likeness between the Father and the Son than this, the language here used would be extravagantly strong. To apply such language to this very partial amount of resemblance, would be monstrous; and that the Spirit who indited this Epistle would thus employ or sanction it, is an idea from which conscience and common sense revolt.

And as, by these expressions, a very close and pervading likeness, so also a clear and distinct manifestation, is set forth. True, Jehovah, the Father-Spirit of the universe, cannot be made visible to mortal eye; and even Christ, albeit "the image of God," has not, in this way, made Him manifest. Once and again, when the Son is represented as revealing the Father, it is intimated that God—the very God whom Christ reveals—is, essentially and in himself, invisible:—"No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him," (John i. 18); "Christ is the image of the invisible God," (Col. i. 15). How, then, has the Son of God made Him manifest to man? Or rather, how has the Mediatorial Christ, in his own person, afforded a true and distinct representation of God? In two ways. He who saw Christ saw one who was actually God. Even Jacob, when he looked on the Jehovah-Angel who "struggled with him till break of day," "saw God face to face," (Gen. xxxii. 30; Hos. xii. 3-5); and when Christ, after his incarnation, tabernacled in human flesh, He could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,"

(John xiv. 9). I see a little babe in Bethlehem—that is God incarnate. I see a weary wanderer on Jacob's well—that is God incarnate. I see a human victim pouring out his life, in anguish, on the blood-stained cross—that (“wonder, O heavens; be astonished, O earth”)—that is God incarnate. Besides, the whole course of Christ's mediatorial work exhibits God. He came, sent by God, (John iv. 34; v. 23, 24, 30, 36; vii. 16; &c.) His words were the words of God, (John iii. 34; xiv. 10). His works were the works of God, (John xiv. 10). His sufferings on earth, and his glories in heaven, disclose the character, and explain the government, of God. The true and faithful record of these things—of his words, his works, his sufferings, his advent to the world, and his departure out of it—serve to realize, even to *us* who never saw the Redeemer in human flesh, the expressive name of, “the image of God.” In relation to these things, even his visible humanity has an important bearing on thoughtful and serious minds in this distant age. And if we be his friends and followers, his glorified humanity will burst upon our view in a sublimer world, and the visible Christ will be to us the representative of “the invisible God.” As, in an earlier age, the apostles of the Lord could say, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John i. 14); so, even now, Divinely-renovated souls may cry, “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ,” (2 Cor. iv. 6).

Finally, the representation of Christ as “the bright-

ness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," denotes transcendent majesty. The word "glory" associates that idea with Him of whom the Mediator is the effulgence and the type; and Christ himself, as realizing these expressive names, must, of course, be greatly glorious. What is all created splendour, compared with that of Him who kindled up the universe with whatever makes it beautiful and bright? What is the central orb of day, and all heaven's golden galaxy, compared with the "Sun of righteousness,"—with Him who is "the Light of the world," and will be "the Light of the New Jerusalem?"

Of this glorious One the sacred writer still further says, that He "upholdeth all things by the word of his power."

In the Epistle to the Colossians, chap. i. 16, 17, after representing Christ as having "created all things," St. Paul declares, "by him all things consist." So here, the statement of verse 2, that "by Christ God made the worlds," is forthwith followed up with an assertion of his upholding agency. Christ, being Divine, sustains his own creation. He is the Atlas of the universe. To Him pertains alike the sustentation and the government of all. The earth and its inhabitants—"the stars in their courses"—all the objects, and all the affairs, of all the worlds—are under his direction and control. Without Him, universal nature would rush into ruins, or cease to be. Nor is it with toil and strenuous effort that this mighty work is wrought. "The word of his power" secures the end. As God "spake and it was done," as "He commanded and it stood fast," in the old creation; so now, and ever, the breath of Christ's mouth, the touch of his finger, preserves and maintains the universe. What Divine simplicity and ease!

II. The sacred writer, having thus sublimely represented the essential glory of the Son of God, immediately goes on to say, "He by himself purged our sins."

The purification here specified is not the sanctification of the sinner's soul; for the work is said to have been realized before Christ ascended into heaven. Atonement, or propitiation—an end attributed in so many other texts to the death of Christ, (Isa. liii. 5, 6, 10, 11; Matt. xx. 28; Rom. iii. 24-26; 1 Cor. xv. 3; 1 Tim. ii. 6; 1 Pet. ii. 24; Rev. i. 5; &c.)—is certainly what is meant. The language by which the idea is here denoted probably refers to the purification by sacrifice under the Levitical economy, as set forth in Levit. xiv. xvi. The work of expiation is here associated with human "sins;" atonement having an essential reference to sin as what requires expiation to be made in order to reconciliation between God and man. Christ is represented as having made the expiation "by himself"—a view which both indicates the greatness of his condescending mercy in the matter, and accounts for the fact that, by his one sacrifice, such a mighty multitude of sins are pardoned, and such a mighty multitude of sinners are saved. It is strange, indeed, that "the brightness of God's glory, the express image of God's person"—that One who is himself so glorious and so pure, and against whom the sins of men are acts of foul rebellion—should have stooped so low, and suffered so much, and that for the very purpose of securing pardon and salvation for his foes. But the fact that he actually did so—here, and in so many other passages declared—evolves and exhibits magnificent and animating views, alike of the transcendent mercy of his heart, and of the transcendent virtue of his work.

III. Christ, having thus made expiation for men's sins, "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."

As, at the beginning of the sentence, the sacred writer describes the essential glory which Christ possessed from all eternity; so, here, he sets forth the glory on which He entered, as Mediator, when, after his atoning sacrifice, He ascended to the Father.

"The Majesty on high," is, of course, God himself; and He receives the title from the transcendent glory of his nature, his character, and his administration. He is here represented as seated on the throne, and "the right hand of" that throne denotes a place of surpassing dignity and blessedness. When Solomon would pay marked honour to his mother, he places her beside him on the right, (1 Kings ii. 19). It is said that, at the judgment, "the King will set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on the left," (Matt. xxv. 33). Even so, the ascending Son of God is here, and in many a text beside, represented as sitting down on the right hand of His Father's throne. He entered on a state of surpassing honour, and happiness, and power. He is even "set down with his Father on his throne," (Rev. iii. 21). To Christ, in their highest signification, the Psalmist's words may be applied:—"The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head. He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. His glory is great

in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him. For thou hast made him most blessed for ever; thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance," (Psalm xxi. 1-6).

In the times of the Old Testament, angels had frequently been employed in conveying Divine messages to men. It is probably in reference to this fact that the mediatorial Christ is here represented as made greatly superior in rank and honour to the angels. It is not absolutely necessary to infer from the expression, "*being made* so much better," that Christ was inferior to the angels until He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." But, in point of fact, his ascension is here, and habitually, represented as a vast advance in blessedness and glory, and, in another text of the Epistle, it is expressly said that He "was made lower than the angels." From this condition of humiliation the Father has transferred Him to an illustrious place in heaven—a place which no angel there may presume to claim or prevail to occupy. That superior place is here defined or indicated by the superior name which Christ receives. The word "name" is sometimes used to denote, not any proper or specific title or appellation, but that in general by which a person or thing is represented. Thus, probably, it is that the word is applied to Christ in the declaration that God "has given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow," (Philip. ii. 9, 10). Here, however, the word appears from ver. 5—which manifestly explains what the apostle means by "a more excellent name" in ver. 4—to be the specific name, "the Son of God," in its highest and most emphatic sense.

Such is the threefold division, and such the doctrinal import, of these golden verses. How rich are those verses in practical suggestions !

Is Christ possessed of that essential, immutable, and eternal majesty there described? With what interest should we contemplate—with what reverence should we adore Him!—Does He sustain the weight, and carry on the government, of all things? With what earnestness should the sinner seek his favour! With what confidence should the believer depend upon his arm!—Did He make expiation for human sin? How meet to celebrate his condescending mercy, to fly for safety to his cross, and then to triumph in his Divine sufficiency to save!—Has He gone to surpassing glory in the heavens? Shall we not rejoice in the blessedness and dignity of one so generous and so good? Shall we not seek to have our future home assigned us in his glorious presence? Shall we not “set our affections on things above, where He sitteth on the right hand of God?”—Has God “spoken to us by his Son”—so Divinely dignified and great—so generously humbled once, so gloriously exalted now? “Let us give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard”—let us take heed lest “we neglect so great salvation.”

5. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

Here the sacred writer explains what he means by the “more excellent name” of ver. 4, and continues his proof, from the application of that name to Christ in

contradistinction to angels, that He is constituted "much better than these." In Scripture, as has been shown under ver. 2, God *does* call, not only angels, but believing men, his sons. From the simple fact of Christ being called a son of God, then, his superiority, whether to saints or seraphs, could not be satisfactorily proved. But it is here meant, that Christ is called distinctively, and in a special and peculiar sense, the Son of God, and that this fact indicates and defines his superiority to the angels. It is by a reference to two passages of the Old Testament that the sacred writer explains and urges his argument.

The former of those passages occurs in the 2d Psalm. That Psalm, then, is virtually represented as Messianic. The same testimony is borne to it by Peter and John in Acts iv. 25-28, and by St. Paul in Acts xiii. 32, 33. The reference of the Psalm to the Messiah was acknowledged by the Jews themselves ; and therefore it probably is that the sacred writer does not expressly argue in favour of that reference, as, elsewhere, both he and St. Peter do in regard to the 16th Psalm. That the Psalm is really Messianic, is clear from its own internal evidence. The sublime commencement identifies "Jehovah's Anointed One" with some personage of very pre-eminent distinction. In the same direction the prescription and promise of ver. 8 manifestly point :—"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." And there is crowning and consummating evidence in ver. 12 ; where not only are kings and judges required to "kiss the Son," but of that Son it is declared, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him"—a saying which, if applied to David, or any

other mere mortal man, would be thoroughly inconsistent with such other texts as that :—"Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help," (Psalm cxlvi. 3). From this 2d Psalm, thus clearly and decidedly Messianic, is here quoted that saying in ver. 7 :—"Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." The saying, as there applied to Messiah, is obviously exceedingly emphatic and specific. There may be difficulty, indeed, in defining the precise time, and the precise fact, denoted by the words, "this day have I begotten thee." In Acts iv. xiii., Peter, John, and Paul, associate it with Christ's entrance on his glory; and probably that fact is to be regarded as the completion of what is denoted, comprehensively, by his Sonship. This view certainly accords with the previous context of this chapter; in which the sacred writer refers so specifically and so pointedly to the mediatorial exaltation of Jesus. But whatever there may be in this, it is clear, (1.) That the saying itself, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," represents Christ as, in some very illustrious and characteristic way, the Son of God; (2.) That this is still further shown to be the import of the words by the remarkable introductory expressions, "I will declare the decree, the Lord hath said unto me;" and (3.) That the concluding statement of the Psalm, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him," as associated with the command and counsel, "Kiss the Son," represents the person spoken of, and the Sonship He possesses, as pre-eminently glorious.

The latter citation, "I will be to him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son," is, with almost absolute certainty, taken from an address by God to David

in 2 Sam. vii. 14. The words obviously relate, in the first instance, to Solomon. How, then, are they here applied to Christ? On the principle, it seems, that Solomon was a type of Christ. The Epistle to the Hebrews is much occupied in developing the typical character of the Jewish ritual, and this department of its illustrations includes the doctrine that certain *persons*, namely, the ancient Hebrew high-priests, were representative of Christ, (chap. vii.-x.) Nay, the first man that ever trode the soil of earth is said by St. Paul to have been "a figure of him that was to come," (Rom. v. 14). That David was typical of Christ, who actually receives in Scripture the very name of his royal ancestor, is manifest. Why, then, not his son Solomon? The gross misconduct of that king of Israel is quite consistent with his typical character. In some, nay, many things, he exhibited in his life and government a striking resemblance to "the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Prince of Peace;" and in these he may have typified the Saviour, while in his sinful courses he was no befitting representative of that immaculate Lamb, that "King of righteousness." Christ, then, as, in the present case, typified by Solomon, realized the promise applied to that famous king, "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son." But is Christ proved, in this way, to be greater than angels, or even greater than the Jewish monarch to whom the self-same words were applied by God himself? It is not necessary to understand that any such decisive evidence exists in the words taken by themselves. In the former quotation, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," the sacred writer has given an example of a class of texts in the Old Testament where Christ is clearly repre-

sented as peculiarly, and even distinctively, the Son of God. And now, he gives an example of another class, in which the same name is given Him, though not with the same internal evidence of an emphatic and transcendental sense. According to the laws of sound interpretation, however, the former class of texts must define and determine the sense of the latter, as applied to the Messiah. Besides, it is according to the general analogy of typical representations to suppose that what is said of the type is applied, with greater fulness or force of meaning, to the antitype.

Three practical applications, more especially, may be made of this verse. (1.) Much use may be profitably made of the Old Testament, and that with a direct reference to Him, "the Prince and the Saviour," whom the New with greater fulness and precision has revealed. As the comparison of passages in the two Testaments may explain the meaning, and vindicate the inspiration, of the Old, so may it cast a clear and steady light upon the New. The very connection and continuity of these two departments of Revelation constitute a fact of very practical and pervading reference. And in the Old Testament are to be found some of the finest oracles in which Messiah is described, and some of the sweetest strains in which his mercy and majesty are sung. (2.) It is a great advantage to have the guidance of inspired authors in the study of the earlier Revelation; and it is the dictate, alike of piety and wisdom, that, in this great and momentous pursuit, we should meekly and thankfully use that guidance. (3.) How meet it is to "kiss the Son"—to kiss His sacred hands, his sacred feet, his sacred lips—to accept of Him with reverence, humility, and love, as a "Prince and a Saviour!"

6. *And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.*

The argument here is somewhat different from that in ver. 4, 5. The reasoning there employed turns on the application of a certain name to Christ. That here employed turns on the fact that the angels are required by Jehovah to worship the mediatorial Son. In both cases, however, the same conclusion—that Christ is superior to the angels—comes distinctly out.

The present quotation is, in all probability, taken from the 97th Psalm. According to this view, that Psalm is here represented as Messianic. It was so regarded by the ancient Jews. And the tenor of the Psalm itself, which is obviously a celebration of a glorious reign ushered in during the evolution of the ages, fully harmonizes with that interpretation.

The words in the Psalm are these:—"Worship Him, all ye gods," (ver. 7). But those thus addressed under the name of "gods," are assuredly angels. They cannot be true Divinities; for the Bible acknowledges but one true God, and the command to worship Christ obviously implies that they themselves are not Divine. They cannot be the stocks and stones of the heathens; for how could these be called upon to worship Christ? Finally, they must be distinguished beings in the universe, else why should they have the name of "gods?" The sacred writer, accordingly—himself inspired—here identifies them as the angelic ministers of Heaven.

The command to worship Christ is associated with the time when God "bringeth in the First-begotten to the world." Christ is thus described, it may be, in reference to the eternal relation subsisting between Him

and the Father as Persons of the Blessed Trinity; in which view, however, it must be clearly observed, and firmly held, (1.) That the Son never began to be; and (2.) That none was begotten after Him in the same transcendental sense in which the word is applied to *Him*. But probably the distinguished royal dignity of Christ is what is specially denoted by "the First-begotten." This view harmonizes with the context, and with the tenor of the Psalm from which the words appear to be taken; and it is favoured by Psalm lxxxix. 27:—"I will make Him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth." A like interpretation has been given to the phrase, "the First-born of every creature," in Col. i. 15. That phrase is rendered, by Dr. Pye Smith, (*Script. Test.* iv. 4), "Chief of all the creation." God may be said to have "brought in," or introduced, "the First-born to the world" by the whole course of his mediatorial history on the earth. The command here quoted from the Psalm, however, is issued at the time when the Psalm itself is given; and accordingly, it is reasonable to understand that as the time referred to, and to consider God as, by means of that sacred hymn, introducing Messiah to the world.

The force of the argument derived from the command of God in reference to Christ, "Let all the angels worship Him," is manifest. The person to be worshipped must be greater than the worshipper, nay, must be really Divine. Wherefore, Christ is greater than the angels, nay, Christ is God.

Of course, the command here given to the angels virtually extends to *us*. *We*, too, must worship Christ. And in this matter, as we have the command of Heaven, so we have the example of the unfallen spirits who sur-

round the throne. What God requires of them they faithfully perform ; and in the Book of the Revelation we may hear, as it were, the adoring songs with which the hymning seraphim celebrate the Lamb. Imitating *them*, let us also be followers of God himself, and call, as it were, on the universal world to worship at the Saviour's feet.

7. *And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.*

The quotation here made is from Psalm civ. In that Psalm the sacred poet celebrates the creating and providential agency of God. According to the Jewish, as well as the Christian, Revelation, angels are habitually employed by Heaven in carrying on the administration of the world ; and accordingly, those ministering spirits are, in that Psalm, expressly specified. The relation of the definite article to the words, "angels," and, "ministers," and its absence from the other words, "spirits," and, "a flame of fire," both in the Hebrew and in the Greek, make it clear and certain that, both in the Psalm itself, and in the quotation here made from it, the proposition is, not, that God maketh the winds his messengers and the flames of fire his servants, but, that "he maketh his angels spirits," or winds, (*πνεύματα*) "and his ministers a flame of fire."

This description of angels obviously represents them as employed by God just as He employs the common elements of nature, in promoting his ends and fulfilling his pleasure. In this view, they are an order of beings greatly inferior to Christ.

8. *But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God,*

is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. 9. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

The sacred writer here quotes from the 45th Psalm. There is much in that Psalm that cannot apply to Solomon; one of whose marriages has been supposed to be there described. Nay, it is obviously descriptive of one more excellent and glorious than any mere earthly king. See, in particular, ver. 1-7, 17. The internal evidence conspires with the authoritative testimony of the present passage—which also accords with the view taken of the Psalm by distinguished Jews—to prove that this sacred ode is Messianic. It seems to be a Christian Epithalium—a celebration of the nuptials between the Heavenly Bridegroom and the now beautiful Bride whom he has wooed and won.

The quotation consists of four branches.

I. Christ is thus addressed:—"O God."

True, in a former quotation, angels are called "gods." There, however, and in the other very rare instances where that sacred name is assigned to confessedly created and dependent beings, there is not the slightest danger of mistake. But here Christ is addressed as "God" without any qualification or reserve, and that in a form habitually applied, in the same Book of Psalms, to the Supreme Divinity.

II. The Psalmist describes Messiah's royalty.

The reality of that royalty is signified by the phrases, "thy throne," and, "the sceptre of thy kingdom;" the symbols of regal authority and power being here, as in so many other cases, used to represent the power and authority themselves—the right to administer,

and the actual administration of, kingly government. "For ever and ever" denotes the perpetuity of that government—a perpetuity commensurate, in respect of Mediatorial rule, with the continuance of the Mediatorial economy itself, and in so far, at least, as Christ's Divine nature is concerned, absolutely everlasting. "A sceptre of righteousness" represents the justice and moral rectitude of Christ's administration. He has a full right both to make laws and to enforce them; and his intellectual and moral perfection is an absolute security for the rectitude of the laws themselves, and for the rectitude of the administration of them too. If He commands—if He promises—if He threatens—if He afflicts—if He ruins—if He saves—He is righteous, absolutely righteous, still.

III. The Psalmist describes Messiah's character:—"Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity."

As the Perfect God—as the Immaculate Man—as the Righteous Mediator—He is absolutely free from sin and intensely loathes it, He is altogether right and cordially delights in rectitude. So was it during his residence on earth—for that is obviously the period more especially referred to. Why did He so fully and so earnestly teach and enforce universal duty? Why did He so pungently rebuke the wickedness of the Scribes and Pharisees? Why did He consent to suffer and to die for sin? Because "He loved righteousness and hated iniquity."

IV. The Psalmist describes the Mediatorial recompense of Christ:—"Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

Here, as in so many texts of the New Testament,

Jehovah is represented as Messiah's God—as standing in a very intimate and favourable relation to the Mediatorial Son; and here, as there, that faithful Son is represented as receiving a bright reward from his complacent and well-pleased Father. By unction, prophets, priests, and kings were all set apart to their respective offices. In reference to his threefold office, Jesus is called Messiah, Christ, the Anointed One. That in this very text, his official character and work are referred to in the phrase, "hath anointed thee," is probable. But the additional words, "with the oil of gladness," associate the unction specified more especially with the blessedness with which He was invested as the recompense of his piety and moral perfection. In this view, the present text is parallel to Psalm xvi. 11:—"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." The "fellows" of Christ "above" whom He is anointed, are, probably, believers. These are his companions, his associates, his friends; but "in all things He hath the pre-eminence," (Col. i. 18). They resemble, but they do not equal, Him in worth. They will resemble, but they will not equal, Him in glory.

Let us meekly and thankfully submit to the righteous and everlasting government of Christ. Let us seek to have such a friendly relation to "the Prince of Peace" as shall assure us that, under *his* administration, "all things shall work together for *our* good." While looking to Christ's atonement for the salvation of our souls, let us take His character as the model and exemplar of our own. And in respect of conduct and experience, let us realize the noble dignity of being the "fellows" of the Son of God.

10. *And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:* 11. *They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;* 12. *And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.*

This quotation is from the 102d Psalm. But it may be said, What has that Psalm to do with Christ? The authoritative writer of this Epistle says that it *has* to do with Him; and that should be enough for us. Moreover, there are not wanting evidences in the Psalm itself that it points forwards to Christ and Christian times. Thus, ver. 15:—"The heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory;" ver. 16:—"When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in his glory;" ver. 18:—"This shall be written for the generation to come, and the people that shall be created shall praise the Lord." And yet, it is not necessary to suppose that the "God" and the "Lord" of that Psalm is Christ distinctively and specifically. Jehovah, the Tri-une God, may naturally and reasonably be understood by these two names throughout. But assuredly, the sacred writer here identifies Christ as the Jehovah of the Psalm, and declares that what is there said, distinctively and characteristically, of the true God, is applicable, and was meant to be applied, to Christ.

It may seem a round-about way of proving Christ's superiority to the angels, for the interpreter first to affirm of a particular Psalm that it is descriptive of Christ, and then to deduce from the description, as thus by himself applied, the conclusion which he draws. But

surely an inspired writer may be left to mould his arguments in his own way. Besides, it is unwarrantable to suppose that the reference of the 102d Psalm to Christ rests, for its evidence, exclusively on the present testimony. A few internal evidences have been already specified; and probably, in this case, as in others, the sacred writer knew that the Hebrews whom he addressed themselves acknowledged that Messiah is there described. It is not even necessary to suppose that it is precisely in the form of argument that he quotes the Psalm. At any rate, he probably means here, as throughout a great part of the Epistle, to trace and exhibit the connection subsisting between the Jewish Revelation and Economy, on the one hand, and the Christian Revelation and Economy on the other.

The quotation, as here applied, consists of three parts.

I. It is affirmed, that the Son, “in the beginning, laid the foundation of the earth, and that the heavens are the work of his hands.”

The phrase, “in the beginning,” is also associated with the work of creation in Gen. i. 1:—“*In the beginning* God created the heaven and the earth;” and with Christ in John i. 1:—“*In the beginning* was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” There was a time when there was no earth, and when there were no heavens, and when none of the created inhabitants of either had begun to be. Then Christ was—the uncreated, self-existent God. He undertook a glorious and God-like work—that of building up the material universe—and his arm achieved the enterprise. It was said in ver. 2 that “*by him* God made the worlds;” and even that declaration proves his Deity. But here Christ

himself is said to have done the work, and that just in such terms as are habitually applied distinctively to Almighty God in reference to his creation and construction of the world.

II. There follows a description of the mutability and dissolution of the earth and heavens:—"They shall perish;" "they shall all wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture Christ shall fold them up, and they shall be changed."

What is here so graphically described by a Hebrew Psalmist is, with like force and precision, thus foretold by a Christian apostle:—"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up," (2 Pet. iii. 10). Even now agencies are at work in God's material works tending towards the dissolution of certain of them. Water, frost, and fire are all eating away portions of the world. But to these will be added, at the last, some swift and sudden convulsion, telling that her end is nigh at hand. Probably no particle of matter will ever be annihilated; and out of the ruins of the world it seems, from 2 Pet. iii. 13, as if "new heavens and a new earth" were to emerge. But still, the present world is to be utterly destroyed. The green earth and the azure heavens are to pass away. Both shall be consumed, and hurried into wreck and ruin, by the devastating fire that shall usher in "the great day of the Lord." The Psalmist's description of this decisive overthrow is obviously meant as an introduction to that which follows of the immutability of Christ—a ground, as it were, on which to project the glorious doctrine that He is "the same,"

and that "his years shall not fail." But even at this stage of the passage there is a direct testimony to the surpassing power and majesty of Christ. "*Thou*," it is said to the Son, "*Thou* shalt fold them up." Christ, who, "in the beginning," was the Maker, will, in the end, be the Destroyer, of the world.

III. We are taught that, amidst all changes, He "remaineth"—that, in spite of the last convulsion, He abides "the same," and "his years shall not fail."

How like is this to some other descriptions, illustrative of the independence and immutability of God! and how fitted to deceive if Christ be not, in very deed, Divine! But Divine He is—"from everlasting to everlasting God"—"the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." No more can the wildest storms and convulsions of the universe—"the wreck of matter and the crush of worlds"—destroy or alter his essence, or character, or throne, than the fall of a sparrow to the ground can make the firm earth we tread upon to reel, or a feather floating in the air can shake "the pillared firmament."

Such is the threefold view of Christ afforded by the passage of the 102d Psalm which the sacred writer here quotes and applies to the Son of God. That view may well suggest, as it virtually involves, the truth that Christ is vastly superior to the angels.

Among the many lessons which the quotation is fitted to teach are these two. (1.) How unsatisfactory and inadequate a portion for a being destined to eternity are terrestrial things! As, in the meantime, they cannot satisfy the cravings, and supply the necessities, of the soul; so, they are doomed to perish, and man is doomed to lose them long before they themselves shall

utterly pass away. A child building on the shore the tiny house which the advancing tide is sure, right speedily, to overthrow—how faint a representation is that of the moral madness of the man who makes perishable things his all! (2.) What a glorious thing to have a personal interest in the Eternal Son! O happy, happy he who has that immutable and immortal One for his own immutable and immortal Friend! In life and in death, he may triumphantly exclaim:—"I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to his trust." Alas! that such a portion should be so oft rejected and despised! Multitudes make so much of a world from which they must soon depart, and which itself must pass away, that they seek and find no other heritage. And some there are who, recognizing the brevity of life, and the perishable nature of earthly things, rush, as if in quest of an antidote to agitation or despair, to wild tumultuous merriment, like sailors hastening, on the eve of shipwreck, to the casks, and going down into the waters amidst the fire and fever of intemperance.

13. *But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?*

Here the quotation is from the 110th Psalm—a Psalm with respect to the introduction and the general reference of which Christ himself, in Matt. xxii. 41-46, holds a pointed conference with certain Pharisees, and from which not only the expressions here quoted, but also those of verse 4 respecting the priesthood of Melchizedek, are repeatedly cited in the New Testament

in express application to Christ. Indeed, these passages of the Psalm, and the introductory words, "Jehovah said unto *my Lord*," clearly identify its Messianic reference and import.

For Christ to "sit on God's right hand," as has been shown under verse 3, is representative of the transcendently glorious place assigned Him on his ascension into heaven. His "enemies" include sin, Satan, death, persecutors, and the wicked world in general. These must be made Messiah's "footstool." He "shall tread them down in his anger." Even now, He is carrying on respecting them a work of conquest and subjugation which shall ultimately be consummate and complete. Perhaps even his work of converting power and grace is included in the description. "His people," when "made willing" by himself, yield to his yoke, and cast themselves, in dust and ashes, at his feet. The alternative is offered of becoming his footstool by meek submission, or of becoming his footstool by final ruin. "Until" does not necessarily indicate, that what is denoted by Christ's "sitting at God's right hand" will terminate. But from certain intimations in 1 Cor. xv. 24-28, it seems as if, "at the consummation of all things," the mediatorial administration of Christ's government were really to cease.

How dignified must He be whom the illustrious David called *his Lord*, and whom Jehovah himself addresses in such terms as those of the 110th Psalm! How terrible the devastating might of his avenging arm! how precious the shelter of his saving grace! How mad to brave the terrors of his wrath! how wise to fall, in reverence and submission, at his feet!

14. *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?**

These words are meant to indicate the inferiority of angels to Christ. But they also serve to illustrate, both the dignity of believers, and the usefulness of those ministering spirits who, at the bidding of the common Father and the common Lord, promote their welfare.

The question comprehends a considerable variety of particulars.

I. Angels are "spirits."

It is natural to suppose that the word "spirits," as here employed, defines their nature; although it also serves to indicate the rapidity of their movements. "A spirit," says Christ, "has not flesh and bones, as ye see me have," (Luke xxiv. 39).

II. They are "*ministering* spirits."

The word rendered "ministering" (*λειτουργικὰ*) denotes specifically, *religious service*. In Scripture, angels are habitually represented as worshipping before the Throne; and the perfection of their nature implies that, in the course and tenor of their active efforts, they do all with a pious reference to the glory and authority of God.

III. They are "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

Believers are already saved. They possess a present salvation. But, beyond the days of their earthly lives, there is a glorious something still to be attained. A sublimer sphere of residence awaits them. "Presence with the Lord" belongs to Paradise and Heaven, (John xvii. 24; 2 Cor. v. 6-8; Philip. i. 23.; 1 Thess. iv.

* The subject of this verse is discussed in the author's little treatise on "Good Angels."

17). "The redemption of the body" from the dust and darkness of the sepulchre is future. And the full development of the virtues, and the unbroken enjoyment of the experiences, of the spiritual nature, are not to be attained so long as believers linger in this nether world. But a complete "salvation" shall be theirs at last; and "for" that "salvation" they "are kept by the power of God, through faith," (1 Peter i. 5). One of the conserving agencies, it seems, is that of angels. They come to "do service" (*εἰς διακονίαν*) in reference to "those who are to inherit (*μέλλοντας κληρονομεῖν*) salvation." They protect their persons and, probably, guide their footsteps. In antagonism to the powers of darkness, who work such mischief in the soul, it is not unlikely that they, instrumentally, foster virtue, and promote serenity. The narrative of Dives and Lazarus, (Luke xvi. 19-31), indicates that they convey departing souls to Paradise. And when Christ shall return from heaven, they shall bear a distinguished part in the transactions of the decisive day, (2 Thess. i. 7; &c.) For such ends and purposes they are "sent forth." They come commissioned by the Father-Spirit of the universe. The Mediatorial Christ himself commissions them; for not only is He exalted "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named," but "angels, and authorities, and powers are made subject unto him," (1 Pet. iii. 22).

IV. This threefold representation of angels applies to "all" of them.

There is no discord in the sacred choir. Each is a "ministering spirit"—each is a faithful servant of the King of kings—each is well-disposed to wait upon the

humblest of the saints. All possess a common character—all conspire in a common work.

Well may believers hail their privilege in having such pure and honourable ones to serve them. Meet it is that, while they rejoice in being “come to an innumerable company of angels,” they should take them as models of adoring praise, and meek submission, and active usefulness. But never, O never, let them put angels in the place of Christ,—of Him, “the Lamb that was slain,” to whom, as to the eternal Father, the seraphs sing perpetual praise, (Rev. v. 11, 12).

CHAPTER II.

1. *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.*

The word “Therefore” associates the admonition of this verse with the doctrine of the previous chapter. That doctrine consists of two great branches. (1.) The sacred writer affirms that God ushered in the Economy of the Gospel by his own Son; and (2.) He intimates and proves that the Son of God, by whom that Dispensation was introduced, is immeasurably greater than the prophets and the angels by whose instrumentality the Mosaic Economy was given, inasmuch as He himself is very God, as such created and upholds the universe, and, having made expiation, as Mediator, for human sins, on earth, has, also as Mediator, been exalted to the right hand of the Eternal Majesty.

And now, on this twofold ground, the sacred writer declares that "we ought to give the more earnest heed"—that we ought the rather to give heed—"to the things which we have heard."

His language obviously implies that, even if it had not been by his Son that the Father spake these things to men, still, men would have been bound to receive them with great practical regard. If God had spoken them by angels, dignity on the part of the instruments would have combined with supreme authority on the part of Jehovah himself to enforce them. Nay, if it had been by the meanest, and even the most worthless, inhabitants of earth that God delivered them to men, men, in spite of the character of the persons commissioned and employed, and on the ground of the character and claims of Him who commissioned and employed these instruments, would have been bound to hearken and obey. But now that God's message has come through One so transcendently great and glorious—through One who, as God, and as God-man, has such claims to be cordially welcomed and reverentially entertained—surely, argues the sacred writer, "we ought the rather to give earnest heed." And the argument is alike clear and forcible. (1.) The Son of God is possessed of pre-eminent authority. (2.) It is a very special mark of the Father's love to men that He should have sent his own Son to be their Teacher and their Saviour. (3.) The mission of this great and glorious One shows what stress Jehovah laid on the message which that Visitant came to teach, and the work which He came to execute. (4.) The Revelation and Economy which the Old Testament represents as about to be introduced by God's anointed Son is there habitually described as full and

final—as peculiarly clear and copious, and the very last and best ever to be realized on earth.

The things to which the sacred writer summons such “earnest heed” are denoted by the phrase, “the things which we have heard.” We know not whether it would have been competent for God to have saved men independently of any declarations respecting the author, the method, and the nature of the salvation. But such is not his way of saving the sinner. He has vouchsafed a Revelation on the subject, and this Revelation is brought into contact with man in order to his attainment of the purchased salvation. To the Christian Hebrews, whether residing in Palestine, or scattered through the Gentile world, “the word of this salvation had been sent.” Messengers of mercy had announced to them “the tidings of great joy.” The facts recorded, the doctrines propounded, and the rules prescribed, in the Christian system, they, in God’s good providence, had “heard.” So was it with *them*—so, too, has it been with *us*.

By the organ of the eye, as well as by that of the ear, the Christian message may be brought to bear upon the mind. In this, as in a multitude of texts besides, however, *hearing* is expressly specified. God, who “knoweth our frame,” perceives that this method of coming into contact with saving truth has some special advantages. He has used it, accordingly, to a large extent, in the history of the Church. He provided for it by the Apostolic ministry of old; and He provides for it by the permanent ministry of the Gospel now. To *us*, as to the Christian Hebrews, He has vouchsafed the privilege of having opportunities both of reading and of hearing what He himself hath said; and what

He has thus joined together it is not for us to rend asunder.

To “give earnest heed to the things which we have heard,” comprehends several particulars. (1.) There is the earnestness itself—that state of mind which is so graphically described, Prov. ii. 3, 4. Such earnestness, from the nature of the case, has much to do with the attainment of the object; and the importance of that object requires such earnestness. (2.) There must be the decided and vigorous application of the mind to the things propounded. They must be understood, if they are to be cordially embraced and practically applied. It is needful, accordingly, that the thinking powers should be attentively directed towards them. (3.) By being believed and applied, they must be turned to practical account. Without this, they will miss their end—they will fail to realize their great and glorious design. Subservient to the attainment of this threefold object, might be reckoned such rules and principles as these:— (1.) That the “new heart,” the “Divine nature,” which relishes, and beats in congenial sympathy with, Christian truth, should be sought and found; (2.) That men should watch against inward tendencies, and outward influences, which are in danger of withholding them from earnest attention to the things of salvation; (3.) That they should seriously ponder the relations of Divine truth to God, to their own souls, and to the destinies of the world to come; (4.) That they should implore the Father-Spirit to teach and incline them to “give earnest heed” to these momentous truths, and to these high concerns.

In the expression rendered, “lest at any time we should let them slip,” (*μή ποτε παραρυῶμεν*), there seems

to be an allusion to water. The Greek verb employed unquestionably means, in its strict and proper sense, *to flow past*, or *to flow away*. A few interpreters, however, retaining the reference to a flowing liquid, have forced upon the word, in the present case, the meaning, *to suffer to flow away* or *to flow past*; understanding by the object in motion, not the hearer, but "the things which he has heard." Now, it is very true that truth or sacred doctrine is occasionally compared in Scripture to water; as, for example, in Deut. xxxii. 2:—"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, and my speech shall distil as the dew." Moreover, there are instances in Greek writers—for example, Lucian, *Diss. cum Hesiod.*; Origen, *Contra Celsum*—of the verb here used being employed to denote the passing away of objects from the mind; and Quintilian, xi. 2, makes the same application of the corresponding Latin word *præterfluat*, and Cicero, *De Orat.* ii. 25, of the similar word *præterlabitur*. But still, it is neither necessary nor reasonable, when the nominative to the verb is the persons here addressed, and not "the things which they had heard," to suppose that it is to the latter, not to the former, that the figurative idea of flowing past, or flowing away, is attached. It remains, however, to be determined what is meant by a person or persons flowing away or flowing past. *Destruction* is the idea which some suppose to be expressed—*forgetfulness*, or *neglect*, is that which others associate with the word. In ver. 2-4, which are so intimately connected with the present, both ideas are set forth; and thus, in these verses, there is nothing which absolutely determines the question. But surely, considering that to flow past or to flow away does not, in the thing itself, and as a matter

of course, involve destruction, and may even be identified with good, it is better to understand the idea of neglect or disregard as here associated with "the things which had been heard," and the import of the whole expression to be what is so forcibly expressed in the English Version—"lest at any time we should let them slip." Such, too, is probably the meaning of the word in the Septuagint translation of Prov. iii. 21, (*μή παραρῆναι, τίτησον δὲ ἐμὴν βουλήν καὶ ἑνοσίαν*)—a text which it is not improbable that the sacred writer had, on the present occasion, in his eye.

The practical rule which he here prescribes is definite, and the result against which he guards the Christian Hebrews is awful. Divine truth, in order to be practically useful, must be cordially received and permanently retained. The articles of saving doctrine must be grasped with a tenacious hand. *We* must not fly past *them*—*they* must not leak out of *us*. They must be contemplated and pondered, if they are to produce a strong and decisive change on the heart and character of the sinner; and on the habitual and permanent consideration of them depends the maintenance of spiritual life in the soul of the believer. If they be left to slip utterly away, conversion there is none, spiritual improvement there is none—the nutriment wanting, man brings not forth "fruit unto God." How important and necessary, then, that we should not "at any time"—in time of prosperity, or in time of persecution, or in time of trial, or in any of the seasons or occasions of our changeful life, each of which has its own particular dangers—"let these things slip!" And, in order to this desirable result, how important, and how necessary, that we should "give earnest heed to them!"

2. *For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward ; 3. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation ; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him ; 4. God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will ?*

Christianity will be misconceived if it be regarded as, altogether and exclusively, bland, and mild, and gentle. All these attributes it certainly possesses in a pre-eminent degree ; and the Gospel, in the strict and limited signification of the word, is, indeed, *good news, tidings of great joy*. But the Christian religion has both authoritative precepts and awful threatenings ; and the very love and mercy by which it is pervaded it employs as proofs and tokens of the guilt and danger of rejecting and despising it. The dark denunciations which the New Testament contains are fitted to be useful both to sinners and to saints. To the one, they may be blessed of God for arousing the conscience and driving the wanderer to Christ. In the other, they serve to maintain an awful reverence for God and a determined resistance to sin, as well as gratitude for the deliverance which, in spite of their unworthiness and guilt, they have secured. Of such practical and pungent threats a very striking example occurs in these verses.

I. The sacred writer here lays down certain premises :—
 “The word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward.”

“The word spoken by angels” is obviously the law of Moses. Of that law, Stephen says, that it “was

received by the disposition of angels," (Acts vii. 53); and St. Paul, that "it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator," (Gal. iii. 19). A connection between the giving of the law and the agency of angels is also indicated in Deut. xxxiii. 2, and Psalm lxviii. 18. That the law was given by God himself is absolutely certain. Its own tenor, the miracles by which it was ushered in, and the authority assigned it in Scripture, distinctly prove it to be Divine. But angels may have been employed by God in the production of the articulate sounds by which it was conveyed, and also in the thunder, and lightning, and earthquake amidst which it was delivered. On this subject the doctrine of Scripture agrees with what the Jewish Church acknowledged and Josephus explicitly asserts, (*Antiq.* xv. 9).

"The word" thus spoken by angels is represented as "stedfast." It assumed the form of a covenant between God and Israel; and, as such, it was solemnly ratified by certain ritual services. It, accordingly, took effect. Practically, God vindicated and asserted the terms and principles which it involved.

It must be admitted that a violation of some precept of the law given at Sinai, did not, in every case, draw down any decisive judgment from Heaven. But (1.) A threatening was denounced against every such violation of the law; (2.) Even the sacrifices by which punishment was in some instances averted involved and indicated "a recompence of reward" for the breaches of that law; (3.) The rejection of the covenant—the decided and determined resistance to the law—which is the counterpart that corresponds to that "neglect of the great salvation" which is here specified—had no

sacrifice assigned it, but required that the guilty party should be "cut off from his people."

The "recompence," it is here said, was "just." God appointed and dispensed it as the righteous moral Governor; and, in prescribing and inflicting it, He never violated the principles of justice, but uniformly acted in accordance with the inviolable rectitude of his own transcendent nature.

II. The sacred writer states a certain conclusion derived from these premises :—"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ; which at the first," &c.

The word "salvation" here denotes, not exclusively the deliverance itself which Christ provided by his death, and reveals and offers in his gospel, but comprehensively, the evangelical scheme of mercy and redemption. That is described as "great," and the greatness belongs, both to the redemption itself, and to the manifestation of it to man. How truly does the "salvation" realize the expressive epithet assigned it! The negotiations of the Father and the Son, in the depths of the past eternity, respecting it—the long and varied succession of stages, and the minute and complex apparatus of arrangements, by which the way was prepared for ushering it in—the humiliation, and sufferings, and sacrifice, on the part of the Eternal Son of God, on which it depended, and by which it was realized—and the vastness of the ruin from which it frees, and the grandeur of the glory to which it exalts, all who, by faith, appropriate and apply it to themselves—these things combine to show that it is, beyond expression and beyond conception, "great."

This salvation "began to be spoken by the Lord" as being revealed and introduced by the direct instrumen-

tality of Jesus Christ. The phrase "the Lord" is, in this connection, an admirably chosen name, and may serve to recall to the reader's mind the exalted views of Christ presented throughout the previous chapter.

But the sacred writer goes on to intimate that the "salvation" he describes was no random stroke of Heaven—no sudden and fleeting flash—but a Divine scheme, wisely concerted, fully introduced, and powerfully confirmed. "They who heard" the Lord himself reported what their great Master said, and, as his qualified and commissioned ambassadors and representatives, consummated the Christian Revelation. True and faithful were their words; and a multitude, and vast variety, of miraculous works confirmed the record which they gave, and the doctrine which they taught. These works indicated Divine intervention and Divine approval; and it was in fulfilment of God's own plans, and under the direction of God's own wisdom, that the deeds were done, and the power of performing them bestowed.

The sacred writer also speaks of neglecting this "great," this gloriously proclaimed, this powerfully confirmed, "salvation." It may seem strange that any to whom it is presented should "neglect" it. But it is here intimated that this very procedure is possible; and assuredly, common observation certifies that it really and very frequently occurs. The pride, the coldness, the enmity, of the human heart all tend towards this foolish, criminal, ruinous result.

How perilous it is thus to act, and how absolutely fatal must be the obstinate and final neglect of the Christian salvation, is pointedly expressed in the question, "How shall we escape?" To "neglect the great

salvation” is to repudiate and renounce the only method in which God will consent to free a sinner from the curse of the violated law. The truth and faithfulness of God are pledged to the destruction of such as do not accept of salvation on God’s own terms. And as for the Divine mercy—

“A God all mercy were a God unjust.”*

III. The sacred writer argues and proves his representation respecting the impossibility of escape for the class of persons he describes.

The argument comprehends these five particulars.— (1.) The thing neglected is “salvation.” (2.) It is an infinitely “great salvation.” (3.) It was introduced and ushered in by One of transcendent majesty and excellence, “the Lord” himself. (4.) It was adequately and amply confirmed by God in the person and ministry of others. (5.) The fact of severe and signal punishment being inflicted on those who violated the Old Economy indicates, by moral analogy, that severe and signal punishment will be inflicted on such as reject the New.

It is a solemn sentence this. O let us not trifle with the red-hot thunderbolts of Heaven—let us not trifle with the “great salvation,” and the gracious overtures, of God. It is written:—“They shall fear the Lord and *his goodness* in the latter days,” (Hos. iii 5). In us let the prophetic words be realized.

5. *For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.*

The sacred writer now resumes, or rather continues, his comparison between Christ and the angels. To the

* Cowper.

former, says he, and not to the latter, has God “put in subjection the world to come.”

“The world to come” is the system of things under “Messiah the Prince”—a system which was still future until Christianity was ushered in. That it is in this sense, and not in that of *heaven*, or of *the world on the farther side of death*, that the expression is here used, is indicated by the clause, “whereof we speak.”

Angels have a work, and an important one, assigned them in the Christian Economy. But to *them* the government of that system is not, by any means, committed. Within its limits, and in reference to its affairs, they are useful “ministers,” but not authoritative lords. The lordship appertains to Christ.

While we honour angels, let us not put them in the Divine Redeemer’s place. And oh! let us venerate the person, and bow to the sceptre—let us seek the favour, and triumph in the friendship—of Him “on whose shoulder the government is laid”—Him to whom the Father has subjected that “world to come” for which patriarchs and prophets looked, and which has now been introduced into the universe—Him who “has on his vesture and on his thigh the name written, King of kings and Lord of lords,” and who, to all his faithful subjects, is indeed “the Prince of Peace,” (Isa. ix. 6; Rev. xix. 16).

6. *But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him? 7. Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: 8. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not*

put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him: 9. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

It may well be supposed that, in quoting the passage here cited—a passage which occurs in the 8th Psalm, as rendered in the Septuagint—the sacred writer knew who wrote it, and in what part of the Old Testament it occurs. He is writing, however, to persons acquainted with the Jewish Scriptures; and accordingly, without any express specification of David or of the Book of Psalms, he introduces the quotation thus:—"One in a certain place testified, saying."

The passage here quoted from the Psalms is obviously introduced—like other passages from the same Book in chap. i. 5-13—in proof of the superiority of Christ to the angels. It will not do to say that, like the quotation from the 19th Psalm in Rom. x. 18, it is employed merely for rhetorical illustration and embellishment. The analogy of the other citations now referred to, and the fact that, both here and in 1 Cor. xv. 25-27, the application is so definite, and the inferences from it are so argumentatively deduced, render it necessary to understand the citation as really meant to prove the surpassing dignity of Christ. That, in conducting this argument, the sacred writer misinterprets the passage which he quotes, and grounds his proof on his own misinterpretation, is, of course, an idea which must not be entertained. How, then, is the application which he makes of the passage to be understood?

Some have supposed—for example, Dr. Owen (*Exposit. of Hebr.*)—that Christ specifically, or human

nature *in his person*, is exclusively meant by the passage from the Psalms. But, on examining the Psalm itself, especially if it be compared with Gen. i. 26-28, it is quite obvious that in the passage, as it stands in its original connection, the reference is much more general—that, in fact, the superiority assigned by God to man over the lower creatures is there described. And as for the idea of Owen, that in the original of the Psalm, as well as in the citation here made, there is, in the expression rendered, “Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,” an exclusive reference to the fact that, for a little time, Christ was in a state of humiliation—Hebrew parallelism, and the obvious spirit of the passage, require that this expression be viewed as meant, like its counterpart, “Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour,” to denote the dignity of man, and that the phrase rendered “a little” be applied to *measure* or *degree*. Moses Stuart very ingeniously maintains (*Comment. on Hebr.*) that the import of the argument in this portion of the Epistle to the Hebrews is the following:—It is said, in the Psalms, respecting human nature, that it is made but “a little lower than the angels;” now, Christ became a man, and, as such, possessed the dignity thus described—and, although it must be confessed that He died, yet his death constituted the occasion of his elevation to a place of pre-eminent majesty and power, and now He who, by the very fact of possessing human nature, was greatly dignified, is exalted far, far above the essential and constitutional dignity of man, nay, above the condition of those very angels than whom, merely considered as a man, he was “made but a little lower.” This way of interpreting the argument is certainly striking; and it appears to account for what

seems an antithesis, or, at least, a distinction, between the "him" of v. 8 and "Jesus" in v. 9. It leaves, however, the reason for introducing the idea of "yet," in the expression "not yet" (*οὐκ ἔτι*), in the former of these verses, unexplained—for, as applied to man, or human nature in general, what is the force of that idea? What is said by St. Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 24-28—a passage in which he expressly quotes, in reference to Christ, that saying of the 8th Psalm, "Thou hast put all things under his feet," and reasons from it as thus applied—probably affords the true explanation of the phrase "not yet;" and the specific application to Christ which, in that passage, the apostle makes of a portion of the 8th Psalm—the analogy of the text, "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son," as quoted and applied in chapter i. 5, and also of other texts—for example, Isaiah vii. 14, which even Dr. Pye Smith allows to have a double reference (*Script. Test.*, b. ii., chap. 4, sec. 19)—and, finally, the comprehensiveness of meaning here assigned by the sacred writer to the word "all," indicate that in the Psalm, as indited by that Spirit who "seeth the end from the beginning," there was a prior and an ulterior, a lower and a higher, reference—that, in one view, it describes man in general, and, in another, has respect exclusively to Christ.

In commenting on the quotation in the latter reference, the sacred writer proceeds by three steps.

I. He says, "In that he put all in subjection under Him, he left nothing that is not put under Him." The Psalmist's declaration, in this its Messianic reference, is very comprehensive in its import. It attributes to Christ practical and rightful dominion over creation to its utmost limits.

II. "But now," it is added, "we see not yet all things put under Him." In like manner, in 1 Cor. xv. 25-27, St. Paul intimates that death has not, as yet, been utterly subdued.

III. It is added, that already the declaration has been, to a great extent, fulfilled in reference to Jesus. By the light of Revelation, and with the eye of faith, He is discerned in many and various characters and aspects. He is here represented, (1.) As, by his incarnation and sufferings, "made a little," or, for a little while, (*βραχύ τι*), "lower than the angels;" (2.) As, notwithstanding, by his resurrection and ascension, "crowned with glory and honour;" (3.) As thus crowned in recompence of the "death" which He so generously endured; for the Greek text makes it perfectly plain that it is with "crowned with glory and honour," not with "made a little lower than the angels," that "for the suffering of death" is to be connected—in which view, the statement is parallel to Philip. ii. 9-11; (4.) As, in that death, suffering bitter pain, and breathing out his pure and spotless soul, for the welfare, and in the room, of every individual chosen of God to salvation, or, as the phrase rendered "for every man" (*ὑπὲρ παντός*) may mean, and by Stuart is supposed to mean, alike for Jews and Gentiles—in which sense the idea would have for parallels John iii. 14, 15; Ephes. ii. 13-18; (5.) As doing so in accordance with the kind design, and in fulfilment of the generous plan, of God himself—which idea, expressed in the phrase, "by the grace of God," is set forth in a variety of other passages in the Word of God (John iii. 14-17; Col. i. 19, 20; &c.) The conclusion of verse 9, "that he by the grace of God should taste death for every one," probably refers to the previous portion of the verse con-

sidered as a united whole ; but with a special relation to the fact of Christ having been “made lower than the angels,” not to the fact of his being “crowned with glory and honour,”—which latter fact cannot be associated as a *cause* with his “tasting death for every one.” As for the verses taken together, what an aggregate of marvellous facts do they present! Well might the prophet say of Messiah, “His name shall be called Wonderful,” (Isa. ix. 6).

10. *For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

The introductory word “For,” indicates a connection as subsisting between this and the previous verse. Onwards from the beginning of the Epistle, the sacred writer has been describing the transcendent majesty of Jesus Christ. He has been proving Him to be vastly superior to the prophets, by whom the Hebrew Revelation was given ; and to the angels, by whom the Mosaic Economy was ushered in. In the course of this argument and illustration, he exhibits Christ as the Eternal Fellow of the Father—as kindling up the glories of the gorgeous firmament, and laying the deep foundations of the earth we tread upon—as, amidst all the mutations of the universe, himself unchanged, unchangeable,—as, in his Mediatorial person, “fairer than the children of men,” “loving righteousness and hating iniquity,” immaculately pure and absolutely perfect — as rising, through the blue heavens which opened their bosom to receive Him, into the innermost shrine of God—and as now exalted, high above all height, on the right hand of the Throne. But in the 9th verse, another idea,

and a very different one, is suggested respecting Christ. He died—He “tasted death.” How is this? He who was very God—He who, as man, was sinless—He who, as Mediator, is gloriously exalted—how could one so good and so glorious die, and by a death which involved agony and woe? The 10th verse contains an answer. The Eternal Father had a profound and beneficent plan to execute; in the realization of that plan, Christ had an important place to occupy, and an important work to accomplish; and that, in the peculiar relation which He thus assumed, He might be duly prepared to fill that place and to discharge this work, it was requisite that He should suffer death. Such is the connection in which the 10th verse is introduced.

God is here represented as undertaking and executing a great work — that of “bringing many sons unto glory.”

“Glory” is a grand word—one of the grandest in the vocabulary of human speech; and it is habitually employed in Scripture to denote the “great recompence of reward” which awaits the righteous in the world to come. In the *Old Testament* it is said:—“The Lord will give grace and glory,” (Psalm lxxxiv. 11); “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory,” (Psalm lxxiii. 24); and in the *New*:—“I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us,” (Rom. viii. 18); “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” (2 Cor. iv. 17); “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” (Col. i. 27); “The salvation which is in Christ, with eternal glory,” (2 Tim. ii. 10). Well does heaven realize the brilliant and

impressive name of "glory." The place—the pursuits—the pleasures—the inhabitants—all are glorious.

The *place* is glorious. Paradise—to which the departing spirits of the righteous pass—is certainly a locality. We cannot conceive of finite spirits existing independently of place; and we are expressly taught that Christ, in human nature—body as well as soul—is present where deceased believers dwell, (2 Cor. v. 6-8; Philip. i. 23). As the residence of Christ, that region of the universe must needs be glorious, having objects adapted to the organization, and aptitudes, and tastes of his fine humanity. And who can tell but, even while the pure spirit is dissevered from its sister-frame, these objects let in their glory on the soul? But at last, in admirable and exquisite adaptation to the complete humanity of believers, the "new heavens and new earth" will come. In a certain picture, by a master-hand, of Paradise Restored, the plan of the artist seems to have been, to select from the present world its loveliest and sublimest features, to combine them into one harmonious whole, and to suffuse the scene with the richest and most exquisite hues which the firmament affords. It was a fine conception, brilliantly wrought out. But, after all, it was unworthy of the object which it sought to picture to the eye. As the matter of the risen bodies of the saints, so, probably, the matter of the world in which they are to spend eternity, will be refined and glorified. New forms and features of scenery are likely there to arrest the eye, and feast the fancy, and exhilarate the heart. And if there shall be mountains, valleys, waters, skies, in heaven, surely the mountains will be grander, the valleys lovelier, the waters clearer, and the skies more radiant, than in

this blighted world of ours. It may seem sentimentalism, but it is sober sense, to say:—If earth be so fair, how beautiful must heaven be! if the azure skies be so resplendent, how majestic must be that sublimer world!

The *pursuits* are glorious. The inhabitants of heaven shall “see God.” His Divine Essence, indeed, can never be beheld by human eye, (1 Tim. vi. 16). But there will probably be an outburst of visible glory from his eternal throne, significant of his presence and his majesty. At any rate, the soul will realize his infinite wisdom, and might, and purity, and love, with such clearness, and vividness, and power, as, in a sublime sense, to behold the invisible God. And oh! how will the vision resolve the mysteries of the past! and how will it assure the heart for the boundless future! The sons of immortality shall also hold fellowship with Christ. When their spirits pass away in the hour of death, it is that they may “be with Christ,” (Philip. i. 23); and after the resurrection, they “shall ever be with the Lord,” (1 Thess. iv. 17). In heaven they will literally behold his glorious person—they will have Him for their associate and friend—they will bask in the sunshine of his presence—they will gaze into the deep recesses of his love. And, finally, while, in heaven, such glorious visions are enjoyed—insomuch that the *shut eye*, that classic emblem of death, will be realized no more—its inhabitants will be engaged in active service. The conception of a perfect humanity involves the idea of pure and pious occupation. In the Apocalypse, glorified saints are represented as singing hymns and halleluiahs to “Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb.” And assuredly, it is in reference to the

human as well as to the *angelic* inhabitants of the better world that we are taught to pray:—"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

The *pleasures* are glorious. Deep and strong, no doubt, they are, like the mighty and majestic sea—yet, probably, calm and placid, as the bosom of the lake in the sunshine of the summer-sky. Or if there be what is called *ecstasy* in heaven, the body and the spirit, both exalted into mightier strength, and both supplied with a richer plenitude of power, will be well able to bear, without exhaustion or fatigue, the glorious burden. And how pure will those pleasures be! Pure are the sources from which they flow; and pure will be the living streams themselves.

The *inhabitants* themselves are glorious. What an expressive phrase—"the spirits of just men made perfect!" The souls of believers—still sadly imperfect so long as they continue here—still liable to fall before the temptations of the world, so long as they linger on its polluted soil—will, when they have left it and entered "the land of uprightness," be immaculately pure. And the body, raised from the ruins of the grave, will be a fit companion for its sister-soul. Strong will it be, beyond the power of sickness to assail it—beautiful, without "spot or wrinkle" to deform it—immortal, free for ever from the icy touch of death. (1 Cor. xv. 42-44, 53, 54; Philip. iii. 21). Well, then, might the apostle employ that remarkable expression—"the glory that shall be revealed *in us*," (Rom. viii. 18). To the scenes, the pursuits, and the pleasures, of the heavenly world, the constitutions and characters of its inhabitants will completely correspond.

Such is the glory of heaven. It is summarily de-

noted by St. Paul in the expression—an “exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” (2 Cor. iv. 17). There is a glory of the flowers—there is a glory of the stars—there is a glory of the sun. But each, and all, is far exceeded and outshone by the glory of the heavens. And what is so bright, and beautiful, and precious, is “eternal;” it shall last for ever—it shall never pass away.

And whom does Jehovah bring to this celestial glory? “Sons”—“many sons.”

The filial relation of believers to God is often set forth in Scripture. There are two ways in which one person may become another person’s child—birth and adoption. In the writings of St. John and St. Peter, the *former*—in those of St. Paul, the *latter* is propounded as the fundamental idea of the believer’s sonship. Starting from either of the two conceptions, we are free to carry out the figure into the collateral and kindred ideas of protection, guidance, instruction, discipline, comfort, pity, and tenderest love, as bestowed by God on his believing people. It is as children that they are brought to glory. Heaven is a paternal inheritance; although its attainment does not depend, as in the case of earthly families, on the father’s death, but is granted by the living father to the dying, or rather the living, child. The same connection is expressed in those other texts:—“If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,” (Rom. viii. 17); “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . hath begotten us again to a living hope; . . . to an inheritance that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and unfading,” (1 Pet. i. 3, 4).

The statement that “*many* sons” are brought to

glory is quite consistent with the passages which indicate that comparatively few of the inhabitants of earth are in a state of salvation. Even in a single age of the world—for example, in our own—if, in *one* relation, God's children are few, in *another* they are many. Moreover, those included in the "many sons" of the text are all believers from the beginning of time, or from the introduction of Christianity, till "the consummation of all things." Already, a mighty multitude of souls have been ransomed and renewed. In future times foretold in prophecy, "a nation shall be born in a day," and tribes and tongues shall shout, "Come and let us go up to Jehovah's house." Even now, Paradise is populous with happy souls. And at the last, "the nations of the saved" shall "walk in the light of the New Jerusalem"—"a multitude which no man can number." Blessed thought! Blessed to *him* who longs to see Jehovah glorified—to *him* who seeks that sinners may be saved—to *him* who heartily desires that "the pleasure of the Lord may prosper in" Messiah's "hand!"

These "many sons" God is "bringing to glory." He chose them to this bright inheritance in the depths of the past eternity, (Ephes. i. 4-6; 2 Thess. ii. 13). He sent his Son to win and work out "an eternal redemption" for them, (John iii. 16; Rom. v. 8; viii. 32). He arrests them, by his Spirit, amidst the wildness of their wanderings, and adopts them into his cherished family, (Rom. v. 17; viii. 29, 30; 2 Cor. v. 18; Ephes. ii. 1-10; Col. i. 12). He "guides them by his counsel," (Ps. lxxiii. 24). He "will never leave them nor forsake them," (Heb. xiii 5). He "keeps them by his power, through faith, unto salva-

tion," (1 Pet. i. 5). At last, He receives them to glory, (Ps. lxxiii. 24). He introduces, and bids them welcome, to their paternal home. And what a home! There the rod of chastisement is lifted up no more. Discord and dissension are unknown. Sickness never undermines the frame nor taints the atmosphere. Blight never wastes the vigour, nor deforms the beauty, nor lays the lovely low. No prodigal ever wanders from that Father's house. No inhabitant of its happy mansions ever dies. Among the earthly objects that interest the hearts, and attract the footsteps, of the good, there is one that has no counterpart in that future world—there is no green grave in heaven.

The "many sons" whom the Father brings to glory are here represented as standing in a very intimate relation to Jesus Christ. *He* is "the Captain of their salvation." The word here rendered "Captain" (ἀρχηγόν) denotes in chap. xii. 2, *Author*. So also in Josephus, *Antiq.* vii. 9, 4; and Diod. Sicul., v. 64. Such may also be the meaning here. The connection in which it is introduced, however, is fitted to suggest that similar title, applied to Christ, Acts v. 31, "A Prince (ἀρχηγόν) and a Saviour." It has even been supposed that, in the present text, there is a reference to Joshua, the leader of the Israelites into Canaan. Such a reference quite accords with the fact that this is an "Epistle to the Hebrews." That it really exists is rendered probable by the import of the title here given to Christ, the identity of the name *Joshua* with the name *Jesus*, and the apparent reference to the journey through the wilderness to Canaan involved in the representation of God as "leading many sons unto glory." Well does Christ deserve, and truly does

He realize, the distinguished title of “ the Captain of salvation.” He protects the persons, and guides the footsteps, of believers. He heads their movements, and subdues their enemies. He inflames their ardour, rewards their fidelity, and sympathizes with them, alike in the trials of the march and of the battle, and in the joys and triumphs of the conquest. Their “ Captain ” secures “ their salvation.” He bought salvation with his blood ; He bestows it by his providence, and power, and grace ; and He consummates the possession and enjoyment of it, on the part of his followers and friends, by their admission into heaven, and by his own eternal presence and communion with them there. Glorious Captain ! who would not follow Thee ?

Yet this Captain had “ his sufferings.” From his cradle to his grave, He was “ a man of sorrows.” In body, in soul, in circumstances, He suffered grievously. “ Rejected, and despised,” and scorned—hungry, thirsty, weary—weeping for others’ sins, and fearful of his own impending destiny—betrayed, denied, condemned—suspended on a cross, and put to a public death amidst the maledictions of men and under the curse of God—thus, even thus, did “ the Captain of salvation ” suffer, (Isa. liii. 2-6, 10 ; Zech. xiii. 7 ; Matt. iv. 1, viii. 20, xi. 19, xxvi. 36—xxvii. 50 ; Luke xix. 41 ; John iv. 6 ; Gal. iii. 13 ; 1 Pet. ii. 21, iii. 18, iv. 1).

But He is also represented as “ *made perfect* through sufferings.” From his entrance on his earthly life, He was absolutely pure, (Luke i. 35 ; 2 Cor. v. 21 ; Heb. vii. 26 ; 1 Pet. ii. 22). But complete accomplishment for his mediatorial work—for the discharge of the duties, and the enjoyment of the honours, pertaining to him as “ the Captain of salvation ”—“ suffer-

ings" were required. Thus did He work out redemption for human souls, (Isa. liii. 5, 6; Matt. xx. 28; John vi. 51; Ephes. i. 7; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19); thus was He prepared to sympathize, from his own experience, in the trials of his friends, (Heb. ii. 8, iv. 15); and thus did He enter on the well-won recompence of the power, and blessedness, and glory, which, as the Mediator, He now possesses in the heavens, (Philip. ii. 9-11; Heb. ii. 9).

To make Christ thus "perfect through sufferings," it is added, "became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things." It may seem, indeed, as if it were inconsistent with the righteousness of God that this immaculate Lamb, this absolutely pure and perfect One, should suffer. But the Son spontaneously consented to suffer under the Father's government, and at the Father's hand, (Psalm xl. 7, 8; John x. 11, 15, 17, 18). He voluntarily assumed the awful and responsible place He occupied as the Surety and Substitute of men who deserved, and were doomed, to suffer and to die. It was in accordance with his own choice, and in fulfilment of his own plan and purpose, that He suffered. And so, as God's faithfulness, and justice, and purity, required that sin should be punished, it was a righteous, reasonable, and becoming thing in *Him* to permit that his Son, the Representative of sinners, should suffer, yea, to inflict suffering on his sacred person; even as, by doing so, He has manifested and magnified his loving-kindness and his tender mercy towards his enemies, constituting Christ "the Captain of their salvation." By those sufferings, results of transcendent value are secured for men, in consistency *with*, and in manifestation *of*, the purity of the Divine character and the righteousness of

the Divine government. Thus has a sure foundation been laid for human hope; thus has provision been made for the purification of the human heart; and thus, in both respects, is the Father glorified. And as it was worthy of God for these ends, to permit, and even cause, his Son to be a sufferer, so, assuredly, it became the Father of our Lord to recompence that "Man of sorrows" with "glory and honour." In reference alike to the agency and to the end in these marvellous and majestic transactions, Jehovah is here described as He "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things."

O how should we celebrate that love which led the Father, at such a sacrifice, to provide salvation for his enemies, and how should we stand in awe of that justice which, in order to realize that result, gave up the Eternal Son to "sufferings!" How meet it is, that we should cordially accept of that "salvation" which the great "Captain" offers, and faithfully follow where that Captain leads the way. And with what glad and grateful hearts becometh it "the sons of God" to proceed on their march to "glory!"

11. *For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,* 12. *Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.* 13. *And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.*

"He that sanctifieth" is obviously Christ. The person so described is identified as one who is of the same stock as "they who are sanctified," and as "not ashamed to call them brethren."

The word rendered "sanctifieth" primarily means, *consecrates to a sacred use*. This is the sense which it is natural and reasonable to attach to it in this Epistle—an Epistle pervaded with references to that Mosaic Economy in which consecration occupied so important a place. In the Septuagint, the word is occasionally used as the translation of a Hebrew word which means, to *expiate* or *make atonement*, (Exod. xxix. 33, 36); and Bloomfield (*Gr. Test.*) and Stuart (*Comment. on Heb.*) so understand the Greek word in the present text. Even in the more ordinary sense of *consecrate*, the word, as here applied to Christ and believers, may well be associated with the great atoning sacrifice. For how does Christ consecrate the chosen? By bringing them into peace with God through "the blood of his cross," and binding them, by his converting and sanctifying grace, and by the influence of such moral motives as his sacrificial death affords, to the service of the Living God.

Christ and his believing people "are all of one" as being all partakers of the same human nature; and this fact is copiously propounded in the succeeding context. In this view, however, the statement "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one" does not, by any means, fully account for the fact—associated with that statement by the expression "For which cause"—that Christ "is not ashamed to call them brethren." "Are all of one," then, must mean, *are all of the same Father and the same family*.

Even if there were no recorded instances of Christ calling "them who are sanctified" his brethren, the statement of the sacred writer would be warrant enough for believing that He *does* apply to them that honourable name. But we are expressly taught that after

his resurrection He said to Mary Magdalene, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, 'I ascend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God,'" (John xx. 17)—and that before his death He said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother," (Matt. xii. 49, 50). Similar quotations the sacred writer himself goes on to make.

Of these the first occurs in Psalm xxii. 22—the third in Isaiah viii. 18; while there are various passages in the Old Testament from any of which the second may be taken.

That the 22d Psalm is Messianic clearly appears from its 1st, 16th, and 18th verses, compared with Matt. xxvii. 35, 46, and John xix. 23, 24. In that Psalm, the glorious Sufferer who there so vividly describes his own humiliation and affliction says:—"I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee;" and it is probable that, in quoting the saying, the sacred writer means to show these three things:—(1.) That Christ calls believers *his brethren*; (2.) That He associates himself with "the Church;" and (3.) That He renders like worship as its members. The quotation, "I will put my trust in him," is supposed by some to be taken from 2 Sam. xxii. 3; by others, from Isa. viii. 17. As the declaration stands in the latter of these texts, it immediately precedes the third of the quotations here given. And yet, the sacred writer distinguishes the second from the third by the word here rendered, "again," (*παλιν*). Inasmuch, however, as the proof and illustration of his proposition

afforded by Isa. viii. 17, are different from those afforded by ver. 18, the one might legitimately be distinguished from the other by the word "again." Still, the sacred Ode in 2 Sam. xxii.—which is almost identical with the 18th Psalm—although it assuredly refers to David (see ver. 1 of that chapter), may have also, in virtue of the typical character of that progenitor of Christ and king of Israel, had a prophetic reference to his illustrious Descendant. From whatever source the quotation is made, Christ there expresses his brotherhood to his followers, by intimating that He is dependent on the same God, and that He cherishes the same pious confidence, as they. In the third quotation, "Behold I and the children whom God hath given me"—which occurs Isa. viii. 18, and which seems to bear only a secondary reference to Christ—He represents himself as having a special charge of the "sons" of God, and as affectionately and successfully discharging the solemn trust.

Considering what believers were by nature, and what they still are, now that they have been renewed by grace, well may they marvel that Christ "is not ashamed to call them brethren;" and this the words of the passage indirectly indicate. Yet what is so very strange is absolutely true. Wherefore, let them triumph in the fraternal care and tenderness of Christ. Like their Elder Brother, let them manifest their Father's "name," and celebrate their Father's "praise." Like their Elder Brother, let them cast themselves, in filial confidence, on God. And let fathers and mothers seek that, by Scriptural instruction, sound discipline, and a pious example—crowned with Heaven's own benison—they may successfully promote the salvation of the young immortals

committed to their care, so as to be able, at the last, to exclaim before the throne of God, "Behold I and the children whom thou hast given me!"

14. *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15. And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

The phrase "flesh and blood" denotes human nature, and that nature in its weak and lowly condition. The period of Christ's residence on earth is called, characteristically, "the days of his flesh," (Heb. v. 7); and St. Paul, contrasting what humanity shall be hereafter with what it is here, declares, 1 Cor. xv. 50:—"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

It is here affirmed that "the children are partakers of flesh and blood." Strange and striking contrast! God's children might have been expected to be already free from the sicknesses and sorrows to which his enemies are subject. Yet, in order to admonish them of their remaining sinfulness, and even in paternal mercy to their souls, He still leaves them to suffer "the ills that flesh is heir to." But amidst all the feebleness of their present constitution and all the trials of their present lot, O how consoling and encouraging for them to know that they are "children," "and, if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ," (Rom. viii. 16, 17)!

The sacred writer proceeds to say that Christ "also himself likewise took part of" flesh and blood. It might

have been supposed that, if the Eternal Son of God was to visit the world at all, it would have been in some nobler form and nature than that of man He would appear; but He was "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." Yet if, on man's behalf, He was himself to become a man, surely, one might have thought, it will be in a glorified, as well as sinless, humanity that He will come—but lo! He comes, sinless, truly, and immaculately pure, but a "Man of sorrows," weak, and oft-times weary and sick in soul.

The fact that Christ "took part of" flesh and blood, the sacred writer intimates, depended on the fact that "the children are partakers" of the same. He undertook to represent man as well as God in the covenant of redemption; and therefore, while he was "from everlasting to everlasting God," He became, in "the fulness of the times," a man—"a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." It was meet, too, in so far as the comfort and succour of his brethren were concerned, that He should, from his own human experience, be able to sympathize with them in the trials of their lives, and therefore, as they "were partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same," (Heb. ii. 17, 18; iv. 15). Moreover, in the remainder of the sentence, it is affirmed, that Christ assumed human nature, and that in a feeble and lowly form, for the specific reason that "by death" He might achieve a glorious victory for those whom He came to save. His death constituted that atoning sacrifice on which their admission to peace with God depends, (Rom. v. 8-10; 1 Cor. xv. 3; Eph. i. 7; Rev. i. 5). His death procured for them that Holy Spirit by whom their sanctification and enjoyment are produced, (Rom. viii. 3, 4;

Tit. iii. 4-7; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19). His death, contemplated by faith, essentially promotes their purity and peace, and fortifies them, alike for discharging the duties, and for encountering the trials, of their lives, (Acts xv. 9; Rom. v. 11; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15; Tit. ii. 11-14). Finally, his death was the passport to his mediatorial glory—that glory in which, wielding the sceptre of the universe, He subdues his foes, and promotes the welfare of his friends, (Philip. ii. 9-11; Heb. ii. 9).

One of the ends for which He became “partaker of flesh and blood” is here declared to be—that “He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”

The name “the Devil,” like the kindred name “Satan,” is emphatically significant of evil. The Prince of darkness verifies the latter name, as being the enemy of man and God—the former, as being “the accuser of the brethren,” (Job i. 9-11; Rev. xii. 9, 10). It is, however, specifically as “having the power of death” that He is here most prominently set forth. Death has been supposed, in the present text, to include spiritual and eternal death—to denote *destruction*. The way, however, in which the word is here used in the expression “by death,” and the phrase “all their lifetime,” are in favour of understanding, specifically, physical death in the other phrase “the power of death.” Still, as it is in connection with the sin which causes death, and the future misery to which it tends, that “the king of terrors” is so powerful to agitate and injure, death spiritual and death eternal have much to do with the solemn subject here propounded. The Greek expression rendered “the power of death,” (τὸ κράτος τοῦ θανάτου), certainly means, not, power

over death, but, the power which death itself possesses. Still, with this power the Devil is here represented as having an intimate connection. On this subject these three things are clearly taught in the word of God:—(1.) That the Devil, by his wily arts and malignant enmity, brought death into the world, (Gen. iii. ; 2 Cor. xi. 3 ; Rev. xii. 9) ; (2.) That, by his efforts and machinations, he maintains and promotes that reign of sin on which the horrors of death so much depend, (2 Cor. iv. 4 ; Eph. ii. 2 ; 2 Tim. ii. 26 ; 1 Pet. v. 8) ; (3.) That it is in his doleful dungeon that sinners unpardoned and unrenewed must spend eternity, (Matt. xxv. 41.) That He might destroy, or, rather, that He might dispossess (*καταργήση*)—deprive of his power and possession, in so far as the chosen people are concerned—this enemy of God and goodness, Christ is here said to have appeared in “flesh and blood.” He came, as “the seed of the woman,” to “bruise the head of the serpent,” (Gen. iii. 15). “For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil,” (1 John iii. 8). “He spoiled principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them on his cross,” (Col. ii. 15). And, as the once crucified, but now, because humbled, glorified Mediator, He “will bruise Satan shortly under” his Church’s “feet,” (Rom. xvi. 20). Already “the children” of God are disenthralled from the yoke and bondage of the fallen archangel, (Acts xxvi. 18 ; Col. i. 13) ; and the time cometh when they shall be set completely and for ever free. All this they owe to the incarnation and the death of their Substitute and Surety—of that generous Friend who “is not ashamed to call them brethren.”

The sacred writer, still further accounting for Christ's assumption of a weak and lowly humanity, represents Him as proposing to "deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

All unconverted sinners are liable to "the fear of death." Some of them contrive both to live and to die without any great alarm or perturbation about the matter. But the souls of many of them, in the prospect of death, groan and tremble, if not constantly, at least on particular occasions; and *all* of them are "subject" and exposed to the anguish and agitation which that dark anticipation is fitted to inspire. And in the times of the Old Testament—ere ever Christ "brought life and immortality to light," (2 Tim. i. 10), and, dying for human sin, forthwith arose as "the first-fruits of sleeping" saints, (1 Cor. xv. 20)—even God's believing people were sadly liable to "the fear of death." But from that fear, and, better still, from all cause of fear—from the condemning sentence of the law, and from the "fearful looking for of judgment"—Jesus came to set his chosen free. He "was delivered for their offences," He "was raised again for their justification," and He has revealed himself as "the Resurrection and the Life," (Rom. iv. 25; John xi. 25).

Welcome to the Conqueror of Satan and of Death! In mercy to captive souls, He came into the world, and bowed down his head in sacrifice, erewhile. In love to "the children," He heaps upon their souls the salvation which He purchased with his blood. Bond-slaves let us be no longer, but "children" rather—dutiful and happy children—willing to live, that we may do our Father's work—willing to die, that we may see our Father's face. But to thee, captive of the Devil, how

terrible is Death! Nor is it the less terrible, but all the more, if thou canst look on it without alarm. What then? Must thou labour to pay the debt thou hast incurred to God? Pay!—that, verily, thou canst not do. Pay!—by faith receive the Redeemer, and thou art free.

“Pay!—follow Christ, and all is paid,
His death your peace ensures;
Think on the grave where He was laid,
And calm descend to yours.”*

16. *For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.*

In the former clause of this verse, the words from “him” to “of,” both included, are a supplement of the translators; so also, in the latter clause, is the word “him.” This fact is indicated in the English Translation by the words being printed in italics, and in this Commentary by the use of ordinary letters. It certainly was foretold that Messiah was to be a descendant of Abraham. But assuredly, his realization of the prediction cannot be naturally and distinctly denoted by the statement that he “took on Abraham’s (*ἐπιλαμβάνεται*) seed.” And if our translators supposed the apostle to mean, simply, that Christ assumed, not the angelic nature, but the human nature as it existed in the case of the Jewish people, there are certain things which might be strongly urged against their view. “Angels” and “the seed” are directly governed by “took on;” and there is no indication, in the construction of the sentence, that such a supplement as, “the nature of,” is requisite. Now, to *take on angels* cannot mean, to assume the angelic nature, and to *take on the seed of Abraham* cannot mean, to

* Cowper.

assume the nature of the Jews. There is no need of adopting such a sense. Another, in itself quite as good, and certainly far more accordant with the simple and natural interpretation of the words, may be obtained. Our translators themselves suggest it in the margin:—“He taketh not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold.” True, Christ’s assumption of human nature is specified in ver. 14, 15, and with these verses the present is connected by the introductory word “For.” But this word by no means necessarily implies that the precise doctrine propounded in ver. 14, 15, is repeated in ver. 16. Nay, a more suitable connection is brought out by supposing that the latter is intended to explain why Christ, instead of assuming the nature of angels, became partaker of “flesh and blood.”

In this verse, then, the sacred writer teaches us that it was not for the deliverance of angels, fallen or un-fallen, that Christ became a man and suffered death, but for human beings—for Jewish sinners. The Jews—“the seed of Abraham”—are specifically mentioned because the letter is addressed to Hebrews, and perhaps also because it was as a Jew in the midst of Jews that Jesus Christ was born, and lived, and ministered, and died. But, as the Old Testament frequently foretells, and the New Testament habitually declares, the incarnation and death of Christ had a respect to the salvation of Gentiles as well as Jews. “Jesus Christ,” says St. Paul, (Rom. xv. 8-12,) “was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, ‘For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy

name.' And again, he saith, 'Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.' And again, 'Praise the Lord, ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.' And again, Esaias saith, 'There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.'" And in Ephes. ii. 11-22, and iii. 1-9, how finely is the relation of Christ's mediatorial work to the Gentile world set forth!

17. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. 18. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

The expression "in all things" must be interpreted according to the context and the nature of the case. In respect of sin—except by imputation—Christ did not resemble those whom He calls "his brethren." But in respect of constitution and experience—the two points specifically mentioned in the context—there was a close and comprehensive likeness between the two parties. The suitableness—the moral necessity—of this likeness arises from the appointment of God, the design of Christ himself, and the nature of the work to be performed, and of the end to be secured, on behalf of sinful men.

The high-priesthood of Christ is a principal topic in the Epistle to the Hebrews. At this point the sacred writer brings it into view.

To Jesus pertains both the function of presenting atoning sacrifice, and the function of offering intercessions at the Throne, (chapt. vii. 25, 27, ix. 26, x. 12 ;

Rom. viii. 34; Ephes. v. 2). In both respects, even the ordinary priests of the Levitical Economy may be regarded, on the ground of what is taught in this Epistle (chapt. ix. x.) respecting the typical character of that Economy, as representative of Christ. But here, and in many other texts of the Epistle, (chapt. iii. 1, iv. 14, 15, v. 5, 10, vi. 20, vii. 26, viii. 1, ix. 11, x. 21), He is called, not only a priest, but a high-priest. How, and wherein did the Jewish high-priest differ from the rest of the sacerdotal order? And how and wherein does Jesus realize the distinctive and peculiar import of the name? (1.) The Jewish high priest was the most distinguished member of the priesthood—representing the complete sacerdotal college, superintending and regulating all the rest, and, even by the surpassing splendour of his robes, standing out as peculiarly great and dignified, (Exod. xxviii. xxxix). Beautiful type, in these respects, of Him who “in all things has the pre-eminence,” (Col. i. 18)! (2.) It was the specific and characteristic work of the high-priest, once a-year, after presenting sacrifice without, to pass through the inner veil, into the holiest of all, and there, before the mercy-seat, to plead the cause of Israel, (Lev. xvi). How strikingly representative, in this respect, of Jesus offering propitiatory sacrifice on earth—the outer court, as it were, of God’s magnificent temple—and then, “with his own blood,” passing, through the azure skies, into the innermost shrine, and, in the presence of the Father, amidst the glories of the heaven of heavens, interceding for the souls, maintaining the cause, and promoting the welfare of believers, (chapt. ix. 7-12, 23-26)! Verily, Jesus realizes the expressive name, “a high priest.”

Two epithets are here applied to Christ, the high-priest.

He is "merciful"—that is, compassionate and kind—and He is "faithful"—that is, diligently, dutifully, and successfully discharges his appointed work. In all his relations to "the children," He is characterized by these noble attributes. But here it is in specific connection with the functions of his high-priesthood that they are set before us. In the discharge of that office—in his atoning sacrifice and his interceding prayers—mercy and fidelity are conspicuously seen.

The sphere or department in which He acts as "a merciful and faithful high priest" is denoted by the phrase, "in things pertaining to God." God appointed Him to his sacerdotal work. To God his sacerdotal sacrifice is rendered and his sacerdotal intercessions are addressed. The sin which He came to expiate, and the salvation which He has secured for sinners—both have direct and essential reference to God.

The sacred writer represents Christ, the "merciful and faithful high priest," as "making reconciliation for the sins of the people." Under this description, both his sacrifice and his intercession may be included. On both, reconciliation between God and man depends. Because He suffered and died on earth, and because He lives and pleads in heaven, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him," (Rom. v. 9-11; Heb. vii. 25-27).

This priestly work, and the mercy and fidelity with which He executes it, are still further illustrated in the 18th verse. "He hath suffered, being tempted." The word rendered "tempted" may be applied to the various trials which Christ endured in his earthly pilgrimage; and assuredly, "He is able," by reason of this experience—both in respect of the propitiatory virtue of his

sufferings, and in respect of the human sympathy with which He has been prepared to regard the trials of his brethren—to aid and comfort them under the pressure of those trials. The analogy, however, of chapt. iv. 15—where the fact that Christ was “tempted” is associated with the expression “yet without sin”—is in favour of supposing that there is here a special, if not exclusive, reference to the temptations to violate the law of God to which Christ was subject. One series of such temptations is recorded in Matt. iv. 1-11 and Luke iv. 1-13. The statement in the latter of these passages that “the Devil departed from him *for a season*” (ver. 13) indicates that the Evil Spirit returned to Christ; and, accordingly, Jesus says, John xiv. 30, “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” The cross is represented as a battle-field where Jesus “spoiled principalities and powers,” (Col. ii. 15); and that, both there and in the Garden, He suffered under sore, though, on *his* part, sinless temptation, there can be no reasonable doubt. The connection between temptation and suffering in the case of Christ—indicated by the statement, “He hath suffered, being tempted”—was twofold:—(1.) Intense suffering created or occasioned temptation; (2.) Temptation produced suffering in Christ’s human heart, and, it may be, even agitated his corporeal frame. The strict rendering of the phrase here translated “In that” (*ἐν ᾧ*) is, *Wherein*.

O precious High-priest! tender-hearted Friend!
Happy they on whom thy propitiatory blood is sprinkled,
and on whom thy fraternal affection rests!

CHAPTER III.

1. *Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.*

To the persons here addressed is applied a twofold title:—"holy brethren," and "partakers of the heavenly calling."

"Brethren" is a name that was habitually employed among the Jews to denote the fellow-members of their church. It is incorporated by Christ himself into the terms and constitution of his sacred commonwealth; and it is very frequently applied in the apostolic writings to the genuine members of that commonwealth. In this relation, it indicates, and corresponds to the glorious fact, that true Christians are all children of the same Father, partakers of the same privileges, devoted to the same pursuits, and heirs of the same inheritance. Their brotherhood is spiritual; and they themselves, as consecrated by Christ—set apart, by his justifying and purifying grace, to the service and fellowship of God—are "holy."

The characteristic and peculiar "calling" of which, in the New Testament, believers are said to be partakers comprehends, not only the outward offer and invitation, but also that inward operation of the Holy Ghost by which the assent is won and the soul subdued. A mighty and momentous achievement this — well worthy of the epithets "holy" (2 Tim. i. 9), "high" (Philip. iii. 14,) and "heavenly." The last is that which is here applied to it. This calling indeed is "heavenly." It is heavenly in its *origin*, heavenly in

its *objects*, and heavenly in its *issue and consummation*. As it came from heaven, so it is conversant with heaven, and leads to heaven.

The persons described as “holy brethren,” and “partakers of the heavenly calling,” are here required to “consider Christ Jesus.”

The consideration here inculcated comprehends, of course, intellectual apprehension, serious contemplation, and practical regard. The command to practise it supposes the existence of certain means of attaining an accurate and salutary acquaintance with Christ, and virtually requires Christians to use those means with earnestness, diligence, and success. Chief among these are the word, the ordinances, and the Spirit, of the Lord. The consideration here inculcated, from the arrangements of Christianity, and even from the constitution of the human mind, is essential to the attainment of those sound, comprehensive, realizing, and confiding views of Christ on which spiritual safety and sanctity and happiness depend. The want of such consideration is at the root of the unbelief and irreligion which so much prevail. Still might the old complaint be made: —“The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider,” (Isa. i. 3).

The consideration of Christ is here urged on Christians by the introductory word “therefore”—a word by which the description contained in the previous context of the incarnation, the priesthood, the dignity, and the excellence of Christ is brought to bear on the duty here prescribed.

If Christ came before us merely as one who had made large professions and asserted lofty claims, while those

professions and these claims were still undetermined and unsettled ; still, as inquirers after truth in a matter that may have an important bearing on our duty and destiny, we should be bound to “consider” him. Or, if He came before us merely as one of that distinguished class of men who have blessed and adorned the world by their heroic deeds, or instructive words, or patriotic efforts, or generous sacrifices ; we should be bound, in respect to *him*, and for improvement to *ourselves*, to “consider” him. But when He is veritably and avowedly “the Brightness of Jehovah’s glory,” and yet became, in mercy to his enemies, a man, and, as God-man Mediator, and in fulfilment of his high and generous design, lived and laboured and suffered and died, and, having made sacerdotal expiation for human sin, now makes sacerdotal intercession for human souls—in both, “a merciful and faithful High Priest”—O, surely, we are specially bound to direct our minds, in serious and thoughtful consideration, towards Him, and well may the sacred writer call on those who have “tasted and seen that Christ is gracious”—the “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling”—men who have so intimately to do with that Divine Redeemer, and whose obligations to esteem and to obey him are so tender and so stringent—to “consider Christ Jesus.”

As if, in order still further to enforce the consideration here inculcated, the sacred writer proceeds to give a description of Christ—calling Him, within the compass of this very verse, “the Apostle and High Priest of our profession.”

The “profession” (*ὁμολογία*) here specified has been supposed to mean, the pledge or promise given by Christ to execute the office of a high-priest. The pro-

noun "our" is opposed to this sense. "Of our profession" assuredly means, either, *whom we profess*, or—which is, on the whole, a simpler and more natural interpretation—*belonging to the religion which we, as Christians, hold*.

Deyling (*Observ. Sacr.* vol. i.) quotes from an old Jewish book a passage in which the Hebrew high-priest is represented as the *legate* of the Great Sanhedrim, and supposes that to this character there is a reference when "the High Priest of our profession" is also called an "Apostle." The word "Apostle" denotes *a person sent forth*, and is probably here applied to Christ on the ground of the comparison which the sacred writer now proceeds to institute between Him and Moses. This is the only text in the Bible in which the specific name "Apostle" is applied to Christ. But it is often affirmed respecting Him—more especially by himself, in the Gospel of St. John—that He was "sent by God." His commission from the Father respected, not only his work as a Prophet, but also the other Mediatorial offices which He came to execute; so that, although it was chiefly as Divinely commissioned teachers that his disciples were called *apostles*, it would be unreasonable thus to restrict the reference in the application of the name "Apostle" to Jesus Christ. His sacerdotal sacrifice was expressly contemplated in his celestial commission. "Herein is love," says St. John, "not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent (*ἀπέστειλεν*) his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," (1 John iv. 10). This work of propitiation is very specially insisted on throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews; and here, while it may be pointed at by the name "Apostle," it is more explicitly expressed by the name "High Priest."

2. *Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.*

The sacred writer has already compared and contrasted Christ with the Prophets and the Angels. He now proceeds to compare and contrast Him with Moses. And first of all, he represents both as "faithful"—a character which he has already assigned to Christ, chap. ii. 17.

The "house," or family, in which Moses was faithful—called "his" in respect, probably, of God the Proprietor, not of Moses the steward, (see Numb. xii. 7)—was the Jewish Commonwealth. This had been committed by God to his special charge. As a steward of Him who chose the Israelites to be "a peculiar people to himself," he, instrumentally, guided their movements, and supplied their wants. In the discharge of this vocation, he was "faithful." He did what God required—and that, in deference to God's authority, and in fulfilment of God's command. And so, he glorified Him by whom he was commissioned, and promoted the welfare of the people committed to his charge. His fidelity, too, was comprehensive in its range. He, no doubt, erred in some respects, in so far as his personal conduct was concerned. But he was systematically faithful, and his fidelity extended to every portion, and to the whole extent, of the establishment of which he had the charge—he "was faithful in *all* his house."

"I will raise them up," said the Lord to Moses, "a Prophet *like unto thee*," (Deut. xviii. 18). That predicted Prophet, as the New Testament expressly teaches, (Acts iii. 22, 23; vii. 37,) is Christ. And verily, "as Moses was faithful," so, as is here declared, was He. How faithfully did He obey his Father's law! How faithfully did He execute his Father's work! In what

He was, in what He said, in what He did, in what He suffered, He realized the commission, and aimed at the glory, of his God. Like ends He seeks, and like fidelity He maintains, as Mediator, still. And, faithful to his Father, faithful He was, and is, and yet shall be, to “them that come unto God by him.”

It was, no doubt, in some respects, a very peculiar work which Christ undertook to execute, and in the discharge of which his unswerving fidelity is shown. Even the charge assigned to Moses was not, in all respects, such a charge as is assigned to *us*. But as truly as to Moses—as truly as to Christ—to *us* a charge—a practical, momentous, and responsible charge—has been committed. Our own souls, and the souls of others, have been intrusted to our care. God gives us the commission, and God will call us to account. Are we faithful, as Jesus, and even as Moses, was—truly, comprehensively, religiously faithful? Happy he who is so now, and to whom, in the day of inquisition, the commendation and welcome shall be given:—“Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

3. *For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.* 4. *For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.*

It is not exactly the erection, or building, of a house, that the sacred writer refers to in this text. To denote this process the ordinary and appropriate word is *οικοδομεῖν*. The verb here employed (*κατασκευάσας*) is different, and means, in connection with the word for “house” (*οἶκος*), the arrangement, or, more compre-

hensively, the construction and constitution, of a dwelling, or of the family which inhabits it. With either of these senses of the verb, however, there is no need of departing from the usual and simple meaning of the word here rendered, according to its ordinary signification, "house"—true though it be that, occasionally, that Greek word, like our corresponding English one, denotes *a family*.

In ordinary life, he who, in the exercise of power and skill, constructs a house, or puts it in order, for himself, is more honourable—occupies a more distinguished place—than the house itself. So, assuredly, it is with respect to Christ and the Church. The "Angel of the Covenant" reared the Hebrew Constitution, and incorporated the Jewish people; the "Prophet like unto Moses" builds his "spiritual house"—constructs by his power, as by his wisdom He has planned, the Christian Church. The house of Christ "hath honour;" and so the words of ver. 3 imply. The true Church is the production, the expression, the memorial, of marvellous skill, and might, and mercy. Its stones, cut from a rough and rugged quarry, have been hewn, and polished, and wisely fitted into their appropriate places. The edifice is fair, and Christ himself inhabits it. And, as the house is honourable, so even to Moses honour appertains. High was his commission, and his fidelity was great. The Jewish nation honoured him; all intelligent and pious students of his life and history may be expected to regard him with esteem; and God himself approved, commended, and rewarded him. But, as is here suggested, Moses was but a part of the house; and, as is also explicitly declared, Christ, the Arranger, "has more honour than the house," and "is counted

worthy of more glory than Moses." The human product of absolute and infinite perfection cannot be equal to Him in whom that perfection dwells. And in respect of personal dignity, of official place, and of fidelity to God and man, how far inferior was Moses to Christ! The sacred writer would have the Christian Hebrews to revere and esteem the memory of Moses; but he uses the very loftiness of the claims, and the very excellence of the character, of that distinguished man, as channels of conveyance, so to speak, for pre-eminently high ideas of the claims and character of Christ. "Fairer than the children of men," nobler than the angels of the heavens, is that "High Priest and Apostle." Of what "glory" is He "thought worthy" by those inhabitants of earth to whom his "name is as ointment poured forth"—by those hymning seraphim of heaven who "veil their faces" in his presence, as they pour their lofty halleluiahs on his ear (Isa. vi. 2; John xii. 41)—by Him, that Eternal Father who "set Him at his own right hand in the heavenly places," and "hath put all things under his feet," (Ephes. i. 20-22)! Yes, "Moses was faithful," and the Church, in spite of all her sad deformities, is fair; but fairer, brighter, better far is Christ—"in all things He has the pre-eminence," (Col. i. 18).

The statement in ver. 4, "He that built (arranged, *κατασκευάσας*) all things is God," has been understood to affirm the Divinity of Christ, the Arranger of the house specified in ver. 3. That Christ is God is true; and that doctrine is, in the first chapter, expressly taught. But this verse, in both its clauses, seems to be a sort of collateral and incidental appendage to the previous part of the illustration, and to intimate,

in explanation of what precedes, (1.) That every house has a builder, and, (2.) That the original and principal source of being, and order, and beauty, is God. In this view, it is scarcely legitimate to take the verse as an express testimony to the Divinity of Christ.

5. *And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;* 6. *But Christ as a Son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.*

Here the sacred writer continues the comparison and contrast between Christ and Moses. The passage consists of three distinct, though mutually connected, parts.

I. Moses is described :—“Moses verily was faithful in all his house”—that is, apparently, *God's house* (Numb. xii. 7)—“as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after.”

In two particulars this description is a repetition of what is said respecting the Jewish lawgiver in ver. 2. In both verses we are told, in commendation of Moses, that he “was *faithful*,” and that he “was faithful *in all God's house*.” God and good men delight to celebrate the fidelity of saints departed. “Them that honour me,” He says, “I will honour,” (1 Sam. ii. 30).

But two additional particulars are here specified. It was “as a servant,” the sacred writer says, that “Moses was faithful.” It was not as “a lord over God's heritage” that he had to do with the house. He was not the proprietor, nor was he the independent ruler, of that house. He was a subordinate—a steward—a servant. And it was as such that he was faithful. He realized and owned his inferiority and dependence.

He saw, and felt, and remembered the paramount claims of God. He lived and laboured "as ever in the great Taskmaster's eye." * God gave him certain messages to deliver—and as God's servant he delivered them. God gave him certain works to do—and as God's servant he did them. In all this, he gained honour to himself, in rendering honour to his God. But still, the nature of the business assigned him, and the way in which he performed, and was called on to perform, it, marked him out as, in God's house, a servant only, not a lord, and it was in the former character, not in the latter, that he was faithful in that house. The dignity of the charge assigned to him, and the importance of that fidelity with which he fulfilled it, and yet, at the same time, the subordination of both to Christ and Christianity, are expressively set forth in the remainder of ver. 5:—"for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after." On these words the copious representation given in this Epistle of the Mosaic Economy, as having a prophetic and typical reference to Christ and Christianity, may be considered as a commentary. (1.) Moses, as a Prophet, foretold—for example, in the prediction of the "Prophet like unto himself," (Deut. xviii. 15)—the advent and character of Christ. (2.) Moses, personally and officially, as that very prediction intimates, (Acts iii. 22, 23; vii. 37,) was representative of Christ. (3.) The ceremonial law, as, in this Epistle, the sacred writer expressly teaches, had a symbolic reference to the Christian Economy, (chap. ix. x).

II. There is here a description of Christ:—"But Christ was faithful, as a Son, over his own house."

* Milton.

Christ had a "house"—that house is the Church. Christ, like Moses, was "faithful in the house"—faithful to God, and faithful to his chosen. But, with all this resemblance, there was great dissimilarity; and one important point of difference is here specified:—it is "as a son"—the dignified and illustrious Son of God—that He is "over" it, and faithfully superintends it. On the pronoun here rendered "his own," (which may be read, either *αὐτοῦ*, or, *αὐτοῦ*,) no stress can be legitimately laid as a ground of distinction between Christ and Moses; although, in point of fact, the house of Christ relates to *Him* in a sense in which the house of Moses was not *his*.

III. Christ's house is identified and described:—"Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

Christ's house, then, is composed of true Christians; and all who shall persevere in Christian faith and piety to the end, are portions of it.

This part of the description has been supposed to be inconsistent with the doctrine of the certain perseverance of the saints; but assuredly it is not. (1.) Even if it suggested far more distinctly than it does the conception or idea of a true believer's falling away and ultimately missing salvation, it would not be reasonable summarily to set aside the natural and simple sense of that considerably large class of texts which explicitly asserts the perseverance of the saints, (Prov. iv. 18; John x. 28, 29; Rom. viii. 38, 39; Philip. i. 6; Heb. xiii. 5; &c.) (2.) It may be quite true that the failure of any one to persevere would neutralize his enjoyment of salvation, and eminently profitable to bring that idea before the minds of believers, while yet it is abso-

lutely and Divinely certain that every genuine believer *will* persevere. (3.) Were it the doctrine of this text that none but those who persevere to the last in faith and piety are parts of Christ's house, while yet some believing and pious men will not persevere, this monstrous principle would emerge—that there are believing and pious men who are not comprehended in the house—who do not belong to the Church—of Christ.

But still, here as elsewhere, Christians are admonished of the importance and necessity of persevering; and such admonitions are, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, means of inducing believers, as possessed of understandings and consciences and hearts, actually to persevere. A threefold duty and heritage is represented as really and legitimately theirs:—(1.) “Hope”—the blended expectation and desire of future and eternal good; (2.) The “assurance” (*παρρησία*) “of that hope”—the self-possession, and courage, and bold avowal of Christ, which the animating principle of Christian, God-begotten hope inspires; (3.) The “rejoicing” (*καίχημα*) “of the hope”—the exultation which it produces—the blessedness which it imparts. In the discharge of this threefold duty, in the experience of this threefold privilege, the Hebrew Christians are here required to persevere. If the duty is binding, if the privilege is precious, to-day, the duty will be binding, the privilege will be precious, to-morrow. Necessary for the believer in one condition of life, they are necessary for him in all. Suitable for the days of life, they are also suitable for the hours of death. On the maintenance of them his fidelity to God, to Christ, to the Church, to the world, and to himself depends. Wherefore, amidst the perils from without and from within by which he is beset, and

in resistance to the enemies that seek to tear the precious jewel from his breast, he must "hold" it "fast," he must hold it "firm," "unto the end." Till death deliver him from danger, till heaven receive him to its safe abodes, he must, by watchfulness, and effort, and meditation, and prayer, and other appropriate means, retain his "hope," and the "confidence and rejoicing" which it is fitted to inspire.

7. Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, 8. Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: 9. When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. 10. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. 11. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)

Throughout the Epistles of the New Testament, it is usual to alternate doctrinal propositions and preceptive rules. In that portion of Scripture, it is customary, immediately after enunciating some momentous articles of faith, to bring them to bear on the enforcement of some corresponding duties—and, immediately after propounding some counsels or commands, to follow them up with facts or doctrines fitted to enforce them. This practice is exemplified throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews; and one instance is afforded in the present case. In verse 6 is exhibited the twofold truth, that "Christ is faithful, as a Son, over his own house," and that believers who "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" are the house of Christ. Forthwith, the Hebrew Christians are urged to the performance of a great and comprehensive

duty. And the word "Wherefore" connects together the two parts of the passage.

Well may this particular example, and the general practice of the New Testament in this respect, admonish us of two things. (1.) We ought to yield to this sacred method of associating doctrine and precept—in hearing or reading Christian truth, to follow it out, in our conduct and character, into Christian duty, and in reading or hearing Christian precepts, to feel the constraining influence of Christian doctrine inclining and inducing us to observe and obey them. (2.) In dealing with others, in the form of religious and moral instruction, it is of great consequence to adopt this practical method—to bring doctrine to bear on duty, and to enforce practical precepts by evangelical truth.

The word "Wherefore" is followed up by a reference to one of the most monitory passages in Jewish history. A text on the subject is quoted from Psalm xcv. The corresponding history is recorded in the Books of Exodus and Numbers—more especially, in the 14th chapter of the latter Book.

The quotation from the Psalm is introduced with the words, "As the Holy Ghost saith." In many cases, citations from the Old Testament are attributed, in the New, to the human authors by whom they were indited—for example, to Moses, David, or Isaiah. Nor is it to be understood that these men were only used by the Holy Ghost mechanically for the conveyance of his truth to man. The thoughts passed through the minds of the men themselves; and the reasonings and the style took, to a great extent, the mould of their intellectual and literary characters. In both respects, accordingly, the different writers differ considerably

among themselves. But in each "the Holy Ghost" presided—in each, "the Holy Ghost" both dictated the thought, and secured its safe and accurate conveyance through the lips or pen of the inspired man. "All Scripture was given by inspiration of God," (2 Tim. iii. 16); and what, in the Canonical Writings, Moses, or David, or any of the Prophets or Apostles, expounds, "the Holy Ghost saith." What an arresting and solemn thought! How distinctly should we realize it! and how heartily should we yield to its rightful influence! On the clear and vivid conception of the Bible being the Oracle of the Holy Ghost its practical power and sweetness essentially depend.

In the passage here attributed to the Holy Ghost a certain duty is prescribed. This duty may be regarded as directly, not merely virtually, prescribed in the passage to the Christian Hebrews—for there is no need of considering ver. 7-10 throughout, as, with the exception of the word "Wherefore" in ver. 7, parenthetical. The duty is:—"To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." The voice of God is represented as, at the very time when the Psalm was written, attesting its oracular words. By the announcements of prophets and the pages of Scripture, it was virtually doing so. To this voice the Jews of old time, and now the Christian Hebrews, were to "hearken." They were required, by deference to God's authority, and by a regard to their own welfare, to attend, to believe, and to obey. In order to this result, they are called on to refrain from hardening their hearts. In the Bible, *the heart* denotes *the mind*, and comprehends the seat of thought as well as that of emotion; as appears from the fact that it is spoken of as *knowing, perceiving, understanding, imagin-*

ing, deceived, blinded, darkened, (Deut. xxix. 4; 1 Kings iii. 9; Prov. viii. 5; Is. xlv. 20; Jer. xxiv. 7; Luke ix. 47; Rom. i. 21; Eph. iv. 18). Whatever, then, renders the soul callous—whatever unfits the mind, in whole, or in part, to receive the practical impression of the oracles of God—may be said to harden the heart. Such evil influences—including intellectual prejudices, as well as what acts directly on the conscience or the feelings—the Jews were to refrain from cherishing; such influences they were to resist and counteract. Thus would they be in the way of hearkening to God's voice. And when were they to comply with this twofold duty? "To-day" emphatically and impressively denotes the time. They might not procrastinate. The obligation was immediate—the danger of refusing or neglecting to comply with it was imminent.

How applicable is all this to *us*! To *us* the voice of Jehovah speaks—a voice of unerring wisdom, of paternal mercy, of supreme authority. Words of doctrine, precept, threatening, promise, have burst, and, even now, are bursting, on our ears, from the throne and dwelling-place of God. To hearken is, both virtually and positively, required of all, of each, of us. To refuse or neglect to hearken to such a message, proceeding from such a Being, and aiming at such an end, must needs be a great and grievous crime. By hardening their hearts, men run into that crime, and incur the corresponding danger. Avaunt, then, from *us* be that dreadful and delusive process. O for an unprejudiced understanding, a susceptible conscience, and a tender heart! Nor, in this great concern, is there room for delay. To-morrow is not ours. God's Gospel is true "to-day"—God's law

is authoritative "to-day." Alas for those who will not *now* believe the one, obey the other, and resolutely set themselves against the evil influences which threaten to keep them back from both!

In counselling the Jews, "the Holy Ghost" sets before them the monitory example of their "fathers." They were apt to boast of their fathers; and they were in great danger of imitating the sins and errors of their fathers. At any rate, the case of their fathers was one which they had special facilities for knowing, and in which they might be expected to feel a special interest.

And what does God represent their fathers as having done? First of all, he speaks of "the provocation," (the import of the proper name *Meribah*, Exod. xvii. 7). They stirred God up to anger. And assuredly the only thing that has this effect on God is sin. But a particular kind of sin is here attributed to the ancient Israelites. They "tempted God;" and the time in which they did so is called "the day of the temptation"—which word "temptation" corresponds to the proper name *Massah*, (Exod. xvii. 7). They put God to the test—calling in question the truth of what He had said. His message to them was plain and simple, as well as kind and encouraging; and He proved its truth and its Divine authority by ample evidence. But they were not satisfied; and, if they did not contradict the oracle of God, they declined, at least, to embrace it, and insisted on further confirmation before they would believe it. And how were these unbelievers, these tempters of Jehovah, regarded and treated by God himself? He "was grieved with that generation"—He was, so to speak, annoyed and vexed by the way in which they rejected his overtures and promises of good. Moreover, He pro-

nounced, as it were, a formal judgment on their unwise and criminal procedure, saying, "They do alway err in their heart, and they have not known my ways"—representing as the essence and origin and issue of their provoking and grieving unbelief, absurd delusion, and guilty ignorance, and rebellious alienation from the sacred and salutary courses which He, in wisdom and in tender mercy, had prescribed. And what was the consummation of this state of things—of this sinful procedure on *their* part, and of this decisive judgment on *His*? He "sware in his wrath, They shall not enter into my rest." To *them* the promised Palestine was lost—its fertile fields and its pleasant scenery, its sacred services and its sabbatic peace. The sentence—the very oath of the God of Abraham—of Him who had brought them forth, "with a high hand and an outstretched arm," from the land of Egypt—went forth against them. The "works" of mercy which Heaven had wrought on their behalf during "forty years," and in spite of which they "tempted," and rebelled against, Him by whom they were performed, were followed up by a work of awful judgment; and "the wilderness" which had witnessed their grievous crimes became the burial-place of their dishonoured bones.

To provoke God in the midst of his works of wonder is not obsolete. In this age of ours, a mighty multitude are tempting Him—are refusing to believe his intelligible and majestic message on the evidence, though ample, which He himself has given, and presumptuously dictating what kind and amount of proof they must have before they will be convinced. Truly such men "err in their hearts." Guilty ignorance of God's ways maintains their minds in unbelief; and unbelief consti-

tutes them miserable strangers to those ways of God. Heaven is angry—Heaven is grieved. The red-hot thunderbolt may be ready to descend. But still the voice of mercy sounds; and “by two immutable things”—God’s promise and his oath—salvation is secured to all who truly hearken to that voice, (chapt. vi. 17, 18).

12. *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*

Some would connect this verse with the word “Wherefore” in ver. 7—making all the intermediate part a parenthesis. If, however—as is probably the case—ver. 7-11 are not parenthetical, this verse stands by itself complete and entire. The whole historical and doctrinal illustration by which it is preceded may well serve to enforce the exhortation.

“Unbelief” may relate to any portion of the word of God. As, however, it is specifically on the faith of the Gospel—the good news, the “tidings of great joy”—that salvation is represented as depending; so it is unbelief in reference to that Gospel that in the New Testament is specially denounced. The “heart,” or soul, is elsewhere described as the seat, or organ, of faith, (Rom. x. 9, 10). Here with the “heart” the sacred writer associates unbelief, that is, the want of faith, the failure to believe. Unbelief is a great moral evil; from evil in the heart unbelief proceeds; and such evil, unbelief, in its turn, promotes and perpetuates. Hence the epithet “evil” applied by the sacred writer to the “heart of unbelief.” With such a heart he associates “departure from the living God.”

The epithet “living,” as here applied to the Divine Being, may serve to indicate both what glorious good

is lost, and what tremendous mischief is incurred, by departing from Him. Thus, in *one* text it is said, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," (Heb. x. 31); and in *another*, "We trust in the living God," (1 Tim. iv. 10). The infinite vitality of God is the pledge, both of the safety of his friends, and of the ruin of his foes.

Man—humanity—has "departed from the living God." Here, however, it is specifically in relation to what might be done, or might be conceived as done, by some of the persons addressed, that the departure is set forth. Merely professing Christians, after having been brought into a very interesting and hopeful relation to God, might apostatize; and although believers were "kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation," (1 Pet. i. 5), yet it was, to a great extent, by means of the solemnizing and constraining influence of the consideration that apostacy would be a flagrant crime and a dread calamity, that they were to be preserved stedfast to the end.

The "evil heart of unbelief" and "departure from God" are here represented as closely connected together. And assuredly, there is an intimate and obvious connection between the two. Where there is departure from God, it needs must spring from unbelief; and where there is unbelief, there must needs be alienation from God. Unbelief in itself involves the renunciation of God; it is essentially by faith that fellowship with Him is carried on; and the failure to believe necessarily sets the soul aside from his noble service.

No wonder that, in reference to the twofold evil thus described, the persons addressed are exhorted to "take heed." They needed to watch against the moral dangers by which they were beset, to mark and meditate

the duties they were called on to perform, and faithfully to ply the instruments of conquest. Such heedfulness they required to realize in relation to themselves, and in relation to all committed to their charge. "Take heed," says this faithful counsellor, "lest there be *in any of you*;" and he follows up the counsel by inculcating mutual exhortation. For himself must every man "take heed;" but for others his sympathy and succour are required, and it is cruel and Cain-like to exclaim, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

13. *But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

Daily mutual exhortation is here required even of private Christians. No doubt, there are certain relations, such as that of a pastor to his people, and that of a parent to his children, in which exhortation is specially appropriate and incumbent. But it is here represented as a general duty pertaining to the social connections of religious life.

How sad and dangerous it is for the heart to be hardened, is set forth in ver. 7-11. Against such a process, accordingly, the Hebrews are here warned. One cause, too, of the hardening of the heart is specified—"the deceitfulness of sin." Corrupt prejudices and passions are very apt to deceive. They conjure up false conceptions and opinions in the mind. They misrepresent the truth of things. They induce men to "put light for darkness, and darkness for light—sweet for bitter, and bitter for sweet—good for evil, and evil for good." And so, the soul shuts out the Gospel, and man opposes God—the heart is hardened. Parallel

texts on "the deceitfulness of sin" occur, Rom. vii. 11; Ephes. iv. 22; 2 Thess. ii. 10.

As an antidote to the result referred to—as a barrier against this tremendous evil—mutual exhortation is here required. It was needed in former days—it is needed, but sadly neglected, in our own. And how sound and scriptural, how earnest and tender, how frequent and oft-repeated, should it be!

14. *For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end: 15. While it is said, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.*

The word rendered "confidence" (*ὑποστάσις*) properly means *subsistence*; and believers have really, so to speak, a specific, peculiar, and characteristic subsistence of their own. This they attain by faith; and they *begin* to possess it when they become genuine believers. Here, however, the secondary sense of *confidence*—which the Greek word bears in the Septuagint—is the more natural.

"The beginning of" this "confidence" the Christian Hebrews are here required to "hold stedfast unto the end." That confidence involved, and was essential to, the maintenance and growth of the spiritual life. Both as a duty, and as a privilege, it deserved and needed to be maintained. And in order to its maintenance, such effort and energy as are fitly expressed by the words "hold stedfast," were requisite. Till death—the "end" of this terrestrial and perilous existence—the appropriate means of retaining it needed to be vigorously plied. Then, and in that case, their safety would be sealed, and their eternal life secured.

The issue of "holding the beginning of the confidence

stedfast to the end" is denoted by the words, "We are made partakers of Christ." Of him who does so, Christ is himself the heritage. He has already been vitally united to Christ by faith; he "receives from Christ's fulness grace for grace;" Christ, at the last, will "receive him to himself;" and throughout all eternity, Christ will be his associate and his friend.

There is considerable difference of opinion with respect to the connection of ver. 15. Some regard ver. 16-19 as parenthetical, and connect ver. 15 with the exhortation in chap. iv. 1. Others—including certain of the more recent foreign interpreters—suppose the meaning of ver. 15 to be:—As to what is said in the Psalm, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation;" and consider the verse, so understood, as merely an introduction to what is said in ver. 16-19, in explanation of the text thus quoted. To the former of these methods of connecting ver. 15, the word "then" (*οὕτω*) in chapt. iv. 1, and to the latter the word "for" (*γὰρ*) in ver. 16, is a decided objection. Better is the idea of Bengel, Knapp, and others, that ver. 15 is a continuation of ver. 13, and that the intermediate verse is to be read as a parenthesis. If, however, ver. 15 can be intelligibly and naturally associated with what is said in ver. 14—the verse which immediately precedes it—it is surely best of all, with Luther, Calvin, and Ebrard, and, indeed, according to the punctuation of the English Bible, thus to connect the verse. We understand, then, the statement,—“We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end” (ver. 14), to be illustrated and enforced by ver. 15:—“In that”—Inasmuch as

—“it is said (ἐν τῷ λέγειν), To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.”

16. *For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.* 17. *But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?* 18. *And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?* 19. *So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*

The introductory word “For” associates these explanatory verses with the reference, in ver. 15, to “the provocation.” They have been virtually illustrated, to some extent at least, in the Annotations on ver. 7-11. They specify—(1.) Certain conduct on the part of ancient Israel:—they “sinned” (ver. 17), they “believed not” (ver. 18); (2.) The way in which they were, accordingly, regarded by God:—He was “provoked” (ver. 16), He was “grieved” (ver. 17), He “sware that they should not enter into his rest” (ver. 18); (3.) The realization and fulfilment of God’s awful oath:—their “carcasses fell in the wilderness” (ver. 17), “they could not enter in because of unbelief” (ver. 19)—the impossibility, the moral impossibility consisting, of course, in the oath, the decree, and the constitution, of God. Some make ver. 16-18 throughout a series of pointed questions with respect to the class of persons who were punished by God for unbelief—a view to which the word rendered “howbeit” (ἀλλὰ) is an objection. If, in ver. 16, the affirmative form, “howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses,” be adopted, it will correspond to the fact, that Caleb and Joshua proved faithful and, along with the younger

generation of the Israelites, entered the promised land.

There are still two contrasted sides in the moral world, and even now a great alternative is proposed to *us*. Truth, fidelity, and safety are on the one side; error, rebellion, and ruin, on the other.

CHAPTER IV.

1. *Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.*

“All Scripture,” says St. Paul, “is profitable,” (2 Tim. iii. 16), and “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning,” (Rom. xv. 4). In accordance with this fundamental principle respecting the Old Testament, the sacred writer, in the previous context, records one of the most remarkable and monitory passages in the history of ancient Israel, and now proceeds to apply it, as, indeed, he has already applied it, for warning and admonition, to the Hebrew Christians.

The connective word “Wherefore” (*οὖν*) has obviously a retrospective reference. It points backwards to what has just been said in the preceding context respecting the promise given to Israel of entering Canaan—the sin of unbelief by which they repudiated the promise—the judgment passed on them, in consequence, by Heaven—and their actual failure to enter the promised land. In accordance with these monitory facts, the Hebrews are here exhorted to take diligent and earnest heed.

The word "rest" is occasionally employed in Scripture to denote the placid and undisturbed enjoyment of the world to come. Thus, St. Paul, addressing the persecuted Thessalonians, says:—"To you who are troubled, God will render rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire," (2 Thess. i. 7, 8), and an Apocalyptic "voice from heaven" proclaimed, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them," (Rev. xiv. 13). The idea of the celestial glory as a state of repose constitutes the basis of one of the loveliest practical works in the English language—Baxter's "Saint's Rest." That glory is certainly not to be excluded from the import and reference of the expression "his rest" in the present verse; and that the believer, in heaven, shall rest from sin, shall rest from labour, and shall rest from trouble, is a thought well fitted to cheer and animate his heart amidst the toils and trials of his earthly pilgrimage. But the sacred and Sabbath rest of the soul on earth itself is probably also included in the *rest of God* here specified. To this, surely, men are called in that exhortation, founded on the succeeding context:—"To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." The statement, "We which have believed do enter into rest," (ver. 3), associates the rest with present experience. And although, in ver. 9, it is said, "There *remaineth* a rest for the people of God," it seems obvious from the context that what the sacred writer means to say is this:—that, over and above the rest of Canaan, as well as the rest of God from his creation-work, there is another rest, which his chosen and believing people obtain and realize.

For these, even here and now, there is a twofold rest—the rest of reconciliation between them and God, and the rest of Christian tranquillity of heart and filial confidence in Heaven. It is not the mere element of repose, however, that is denoted by the phrase “his rest.” By that phrase, a comprehensive comparison is suggested between the land of Palestine and the state of spiritual privilege to which believers are introduced. The former is described in Scripture, and even in the promises respecting it given by God through Moses, as a land rich in produce, lovely to the eye, and consecrated by the service, and the special presence, of the Father-Spirit. Even so, the latter combines bountiful supplies for human want, sublime and noble objects of contemplation for the human soul, and influences and associations, pursuits and pleasures, which connect the character and experience of man with the agency, the friendship, and the fellowship of God.

Of “entering into” this “rest,” it is here affirmed that “a promise has been left,” that is, left by God—for, although the word rendered “left” (*καταλειπομένης*) might certainly mean, *rejected*, *repudiated*, the fact that the expression in the original is in the genitive absolute makes it clear that it is in the former sense the word is to be understood.

The illustrations in this chapter show that the sacred writer considered “a promise of entering into rest” as involved, if not explicitly given, in the 95th Psalm. To the promise, as there proposed, he here, it is probable, especially refers. But in many other passages, both of the Old Testament and of the New, the promise of entering into rest is to be found. In the former, for example, it is affirmed that “the effect of righteousness

shall be quietness and assurance for ever," (Isa. xxxii. 17); and a large proportion of the predictions there contained of the Great Deliverer of Gentile and of Jew, represent Messiah as "the Prince of Peace," and his reign as one of rest and felicity to his dutiful and faithful subjects, (Psalm lxxii; Isa. ix. 6, 7, xi. 10; Zech. ix. 10; &c.) In the latter, how frequently do the apostles set forth the sublime tranquillity and ecstatic joy of personal religion! and how finely does Christ himself, to his dear disciples, and to labouring and miserable souls that embrace his Gospel and enter into his service, promise rest! "Peace," He says, "I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you," (John xiv. 27); and again, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light," (Matt. xi. 28-30). Such promises have been "left." The voices that uttered them are now silent to the earth. They who delivered them have passed away. But they left the glorious oracles behind them. The promises they bore to earth were meant to encourage and exhilarate its successive generations. And those promises, in God's good providence, still survive—breaking, as it were, on earth's poor wayfarers, like messages of mercy fresh from the Throne of Heaven.

In reference to the promised rest, it is here said:—"Let us fear, lest any of you should seem to come short of it."

There is a twofold fear inculcated in the Bible. There is the fear of reverence for Almighty God, and there is the fear of caution in reference to sin and

danger. The former is specified in these, and many passages besides:—"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," (Psalm cxi. 10); "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear," (Heb. xii. 28). The latter is obviously meant in such texts as these:—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," (Philip. ii. 12); "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear," (1 Pet. i. 17). It is this latter kind of fear that is prescribed in the present text. It is obvious, however, that reverence for God has much to do with the exercise and maintenance of the religious caution here required; and Divine authority requires that, entertaining lofty conceptions and solemn emotions with respect to the purity, the glory, and the government of God, we should watch over our own souls, guard against the temptations of the world, and fly from moral evil in all its forms.

The natural meaning of the word translated "should seem" (*δοκῆ*), is, *should think*; and the verb rendered, "to come short" (*ὕστερον ἐλθεῖν*), literally denotes, *to have come too late*. Some interpreters, accordingly—including the distinguished names of Schöttgen, Schulz, Bretschneider, and Ebrard—understand the signification of the verse to be:—Seeing, then, that a promise of entering into rest is left as a thing yet to be fulfilled, let us be on our guard against supposing that we live in times too late for its fulfilment, and that it is therefore impossible for the accomplishment to be realized to *us*. The phraseology is in favour of this interpretation; and the connection is consistent with it. The rendering in our English version, however, affords a good and weighty sense. It may appear, indeed, to be inconsistent with the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints.

But with that doctrine it is in perfect harmony. (1.) As for unbelieving sinners, *they* assuredly require to take heed lest they fall short of salvation. (2.) While God secures his own believing people of eternal life, and of the permanency of that faith on which eternal life depends, He does so by the power of moral motives; and one of those motives is the fearful consequences that would be realized by renouncing Christ. (3.) It is quite a possible thing even for a believer, albeit kept from eternal destruction, to miss, by a lack of steadfast faith and of devoted service, the full enjoyment of the spiritual rest. (4.) It is not precisely of coming short, but of *seeming* to come short, of the promised rest—of so acting as to deprive one's own mind, or one's pious friends, of the assurance that he is safe—that, according to this rendering, the exhortation speaks.

2. *For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*

The original expression here rendered, "unto us was the gospel preached" (ἔσμεν εὐαγγελισμένοι), might be more strictly translated, *we have been evangelized*. The addition, "as well as they," does not necessarily mean that the ancient Israelites had heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The word rendered "gospel" means *good news*; and the Israelites heard good news in receiving the promise of the land "flowing with milk and honey." Still, it is true that by the record of the promise to Jacob, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed," (Gen. xxviii. 14)—by the announcement of the "Prophet like unto Moses," (Deut. xviii. 15-19)—by the typical ordinances of the

Jewish Law—and even by the promise of Canaan, which was emblematic and representative of the sacred rest into which Christ, our better Joshua, leads the soul—some of the principal elements of the glorious Gospel had been announced to ancient Israel.

That this Gospel is referred to in what is said about the Christian Hebrews is perfectly plain. To *them* that celestial message—so sublime, so authoritative, so generous, so beatific—had been announced; and it was now their noble privilege to live in the midst of its resplendent light. That privilege was theirs—that privilege is also ours.

But “of those to whom much is given, much also shall be required,” (Luke xii. 48); and to warn the Hebrews of their danger, and to admonish them of their duty, the sacred writer teaches them that “the word preached did not profit” those fathers of their own of whom he speaks, “not being mixed with faith in them that heard it”—or, as the original words (*συγκειραμένος τῇ πίστει τοῖς ἀκούουσιν*) may mean, *not being united by faith to the hearers*. Ancient Israel failed to enter the promised rest; because it was the Divine plan and purpose that only they who treated the promise respecting it as true and faithful should have that promise fulfilled to them. Ancient Israel failed, as they trode the desert-soil, to enjoy the comfort which the promise was fitted to inspire; because they failed to regard that promise as actually and Divinely true. And so in reference to the promised rest of Christ. It is on believers, and through the instrumentality of faith, that, according to God’s appointment and decree, the salvation of the Gospel is bestowed; and peace and joy, in the experience of the Divine favour and the hope of the Divine glory,

essentially depend on faith. John iii. 36; Acts xvi. 31; Rom. i. 16, iii. 28, x. 10, xv. 13, Gal. iii. 7-14; Eph. ii. 8, are a few out of a multitude of texts on this momentous subject. O, then, how important to attain, and how important to exercise day by day, that mighty, God-begotten, principle of faith—a principle with which pardon, sanctity, wisdom, hope, peace, joy, eternal glory, are all so intimately associated, in the doctrine of the Bible, and in the experience of the soul!

3. For we which have believed do enter into rest; as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. 5. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.

The principle here propounded, "We who have believed do enter into rest," is realized by the twofold fact, that true believers are reconciled to God, and that they are introduced into the enjoyment of spiritual peace. With both results, as has been shown under ver. 2, faith has much to do. Justification depends on that faith which unites the sinner to the Saviour; and it is "in believing"—in realizing, as true and faithful, what the Gospel says respecting the person, the work, and the offices of Christ—that "joy and peace" are to be experienced.

By the quotation, in ver. 3, from the 95th Psalm, the sacred writer introduces, as Calvin says, "an argument from contraries." It is in accordance with the principle that believers are they who enter into rest, to be told that unbelieving Israel was shut out. In the remainder

of the passage, two things, both represented in Scripture as the *rest of God*, are brought together into view. The rest spoken of in the 95th Psalm is, in some sort, compared to that into which God himself entered at the end of his creation-work; and the connection between the quotation from the Psalm and the succeeding remark, "although the works were finished from the foundation of the world," actually seems to identify what God calls "my rest" with his own rest from creation. Perhaps, however, it is a distinction which is here drawn, by the separate citations, between two things both called *the rest of God*; and Chrysostom, Grotius, Bengel, and others, have thus understood the passage. In this view, as being more in accordance than the other with what seems the natural meaning of "my rest" in the 95th Psalm, we are disposed to acquiesce. According to it, the rest of God from his creation-work is represented as different from what He calls "my rest" in the 95th Psalm—the latter being the home and inheritance of Canaan—the former being identified and described by the reference to the finishing of the works and by the quotation from the Book of Genesis, (chap. ii. 2), "And God did rest the seventh day from all his works." This quotation combines with the expression, "finished from the foundation of the world," to show that the idea suggested by Ebrard that there is here, as in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, an antithesis between *faith* and *works*, is unreasonable and absurd.

Considering the express object for which the quotation from Genesis is made, it does not fall to be fully considered here. On two points, however, a few words of illustration may be given.

The word "rest" as applied to men almost uniformly

suggests or implies previous exhaustion or fatigue. Of course, in reference to God, it conveys no such idea. "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not neither is weary?" (Is. xl. 28). The same word, as applied to men, often denotes a state of inactive quiescence. In that sense it cannot be applied to God. "My Father," says Jesus, "worketh hitherto, and I work," (John v. 17). From the very hour when creation-work was finished, Jehovah has been engaged in upholding the world and administering its affairs. On the seventh day, however, He ceased from his creation-work, and retired, as it were, from the foreground of the scene, to contemplate, with calm complacency, the works which He had made; and so He "rested."

As, in this passage, the spiritual rest of faith, as well as the promised rest of Canaan, seems to be distinguished from this primeval rest of God; so, in Gen. ii. 1-3, and also in the Fourth Commandment of the Decalogue, that primeval rest is associated with the weekly Sabbath rest of man. The fact that God rested is expressly given as a reason why He set the seventh day apart as a rest for man; and the Divine example is held forth as a model and monitor to *us*. It was at "the foundation of the world" that, both by his example and by his consecrating act, God instituted the weekly Sabbath rest. A merely Jewish ordinance, therefore, it assuredly was not. And so speaks Christ himself:—"The Sabbath was made for *man*," (Mark ii. 27).

6. *Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not*

in because of unbelief: 7. (Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day, after so long a time; as it is said, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. 8. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. 9. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. 10. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.) 11. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

In the parenthetical portion of this passage, the sacred writer gives some further explanations of what he means by the rest into which believers enter. In like manner as, in ver. 3-5, he seems to distinguish between the rest of Canaan and the primeval rest of God; so here he maintains, that although, in the 95th Psalm, the rest of Canaan be expressly specified, yet, subsequently to the admission of the Jews to that promised land, there was still a rest to be attained—a rest the entrance into which was a different thing from that literal entrance into Canaan which was forfeited by the unbelieving fathers, and was realized by their children. In this part of the passage Joshua is called “Jesus”—the two names being essentially the same. The argument seems to be this:—In saying to men, in the 95th Psalm, “To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts,” and enforcing the call by the failure of the Israelites, long before, to enter into the rest of God, the promised rest of Canaan, God virtually offers a rest to those whom He addresses in the Psalm; it cannot be an entrance into Canaan that He thus offers—for Joshua had long ago led the people into Canaan, and there the very persons to whom the Psalmist addressed himself

were already settled; some other rest, then, must be meant—a rest that “remaineth”—a rest that is different from, and additional to, the rest into which Joshua led the people. The *nature* of the rest to which Jehovah summons men is, in some degree, explained in ver. 10:—“For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.” Certain interpreters, it is true, refer this to Jesus Christ, and, associating it with the statement in ver. 9, “There remaineth therefore a rest”—literally, a Sabbatism—“for the people of God,” consider the passage as a testimony to the Sabbath character of the first day of the week. But surely, the contextual relation in which the verses occur distinctly indicates that the “rest” of ver. 9 is the spiritual rest into which the believer enters, and that it is he—not specifically Christ, as, by a very unnatural interpretation, is supposed—who is denoted by the expression, “he that is entered into his rest.” Besides, Christ’s entrance into his rest may be more reasonably identified with his death than with his resurrection. Here, then, the sacred writer exhibits the man who has been reconciled to God, and who enjoys the peace which Christ bequeathed to his followers and friends. Respecting that man it is affirmed, that he “hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.” True, God’s creation-work was admirably good, whereas the sinner’s “own works” are unutterably vile. But still the striking analogy remains—that, as God ceased from the one, so the believer ceases from the other.

The 6th and 11th verses—separated by a somewhat protracted parenthesis—are, of course, to be read in close connection with each other. In the one, the sacred writer propounds certain principles; in the other,

he prescribes a corresponding duty. Men need both encouragement and warning with respect to entering into the rest of God. The former is held out in the words, "It remaineth that some must enter therein;" the latter in what follows, "They to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief." In the presence of such considerations as these, well might the business prescribed in ver. 11 be urged on the Hebrews:—"Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." True, it is by believing that men enter into the spiritual rest of God. But, in order to faith, a man needs to use with diligence the means of grace, and to resist the evil tendencies of his own soul; and, after a person has believed in Christ, he needs, in order to the enjoyment of a comfortable sense of his safety, and in order to the experience of beatific fellowship with his reconciled Father, to labour in that Father's cause.

12. *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* 13. *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*

It has been supposed that "the word of God" in ver. 12 denotes Jesus Christ. That in the writings of St. John that name is applied to the Messiah is certain; nor can it be denied that a like personal application is made of it in the works of Philo. In no other passage of this Epistle, or of the writings of St. Paul in general, however, can this use of the phrase be established. In

the statement, Acts xx. 32, "I commend you to God and to the word of his grace," there is no sufficient reason to believe that "the word" spoken of is Christ. Besides, to represent Christ as "sharper than any two-edged sword" is quite unnatural. The principal reason in favour of understanding Christ by the phrase "the word of God" in the present case, is the way in which ver. 12, 13 are followed up in ver. 14:—"Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." But these words may be regarded as beginning a new paragraph, and as having no exclusive, or very specific, reference to what is said in the two immediately preceding verses. Are we, then, to understand by "the word of God" the revelation which God has given of his mind and will? Yes; but obviously in a restricted and special reference. It is not, however, of the bland and blessed energy of the Gospel that the sacred writer seems to speak. God is regarded as a Judge—as sitting in inquisition on men, and pronouncing sentence as to what they are, and as to what shall be their fate and portion. The following are parallel texts in the Apocalypse:—"Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword," (chapt. i. 16); "These things saith He which hath the sharp sword with two edges," (chapt. ii. 12); "Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth," (chapt. ii. 16). The word, or sentence, of God thus considered is, according to ver. 12, characterized by three things. (1.) It is "quick"—that is, living ($\zeta\omega\upsilon$). It is no empty, inert, unmeaning thing, but has a solemn import and produces a decisive effect. (2.) It is "powerful." It acts energetically—it bears mightily on the condition and destiny of men.

(3.) As a sharp two-edged sword penetrates deep, and nicely separates among the component parts of the animal system, so that word of God searches the heart, and not only discriminates between man and man, but distinguishes, and that with strict accuracy and precision, among the hidden operations of the individual soul.

What is said in ver. 13 indicates that it is God himself, not "the word of God," that is there described. Two things are affirmed respecting Him.

I. With God we, pre-eminently, "have to do."

We stand in a very intimate connection with Him. To the Being who, in himself, is infinitely great and glorious, we bear a very close and momentous relation. He is our Creator, Proprietor, Governor, Benefactor, and Judge, and therefore has claims upon us manifold and mighty. In the services of religion, "we have to do with" Him. In the common business of life, "we have to do with" Him. In the mysteries of death, the solemnities of judgment, and the issues of eternity, we shall "have to do with" Him. We *must* have to do with Him, whether we will or not. And O, surely, we *should* transact with Him as a Saviour, since we *shall* have to transact with Him as a Judge.

II. There is "no creature that is not manifest in his sight;" yea, "all things are naked and open to his eyes."

Heaven, earth, and hell are all present to his view. Angels and men—saints and sinners—are alike the objects of his scrutiny. He sees the hidden depths of ocean and the dark mines of earth, no less than the towering mountains and the gorgeous skies. To Him the actions of all hands, and the secrets of all souls, are intimately known. The phrase "all things" indicates the universal range which the eye of Jehovah takes.

The words, "manifest," "naked," "opened," express the intensity and clearness of the vision which He exerts throughout that vast and varied sphere. The Divine omniscience constitutes the theme of some of the sublimest passages in the word of God. With what graphic power is it described in Psalm cxxxix. 1-12!

The doctrines of this verse may well produce an arresting and solemnizing impression on our minds. With what reverence and awe should we think of Him whose eyes are ever fixed on *us*, and with whom, far more than with father, husband, brother, bosom-friend, "we have to do!" With what vigilance should we guard our hearts! and with what circumspection should we regulate our lives! How meet to cherish sincerity of soul in such a presence! And, sinners as we are, and as Jehovah knoweth us to be, how needful that we should fly to the altar, to the cross, to the very bosom, of the "great High Priest!"

14. Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. 15. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

The sacred writer is to be understood as here commencing a new paragraph. Still he takes a retrospective glance of what he has said in the preceding context about the greatness and sacerdotal work of Jesus Christ. In the present verses, he propounds certain doctrines,

prescribes certain duties, and enforces the latter by the former.

I. He here propounds certain doctrines.

The subject of these doctrines is "Jesus, the Son of God;" and this twofold name is obviously both meant and fitted to represent the personal dignity, and the saving agency, of Christ, and thus to enforce his claims on the homage of our hearts and the service of our lives. The Sonship of Christ has been considered in connection with chapt. i. 2, 5.

1. "Jesus, the Son of God," is represented as "a high priest, passed into"—literally, *through*—"the heavens" (διεληλυθότα τοὺς οὐρανοὺς).

Having offered atoning sacrifice for human sins in this, the outer court of God's magnificent temple, He "entered within the veil" of the azure skies, and now, in the innermost shrine, maintains the cause, and promotes the welfare, of "them that come unto God by him." Christ's high-priesthood is copiously described in chapt. v. vii. ix. x. The nature of that sacred office, as held and fulfilled by "Jesus, the Son of God," has been illustrated under chapt. ii. 17.

2. He is here represented as "a *great* high-priest."

Personally, He is transcendently glorious—being, as man, immaculately pure and absolutely good—being, as God, possessor of infinite perfection—and being, as Mediator, "crowned with glory and honour." Officially, He fully and faithfully discharges all the functions of all the mediatorial characters which He sustains, nor least of all the functions of his priesthood.

3. Of this "great high-priest" it is affirmed, that believers "have" him.

As, to all who hear his glorious Gospel, He is revealed

and offered; so they who really, and in right earnest, believe upon his name behold his majesty, experience his grace, and can claim Him as their own atoning and interceding high-priest—their own immutable and immortal Friend and Saviour.

4. He “can be touched with a feeling of their infirmities.”

“Infirmities” comprehends the various “ills that flesh is heir to.” Even sins may be regarded as included in the present application of the word. The “feeling” which Christ has of these “infirmities” depends, of course, on his Divine perfection, and on the generosity of his human heart. But the sacred writer goes on to associate that “feeling” with the personal experience of the “great high-priest.”

5. He was “in all points tempted,” or tried, “like as” his friends and followers “are.”

Christ was tried, even in respect of sin; and that, both by his exposure to the wily arts and furious onsets of Satan, and by the fact that, although He “knew no sin,” He was “made sin” for others, and thus, for them, endured the curse. And in respect of bodily frailty, and social bereavement, and destitution of circumstances, and perturbation of soul, how truly was He tried as believers are!

6. Nevertheless, He was “without sin.”

As it was not on account of any sin of his own that He suffered; so his sufferings did not overbear his fidelity, nor lead Him, in any respect, to violate the law of God, or to do what was morally wrong. He was negatively and positively perfect. He “loved the Lord his God with all his heart, and soul, and strength, and mind;” and He “loved his neighbour as himself.”

How fervent was his piety! how unsullied his integrity! how tender his benevolence! how noble his disinterestedness! how unwearied his industry! how glowing his zeal! how entire his resignation! how remarkable his meekness and humility! "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," (1 Peter ii. 22). He was Jehovah's "righteous servant," (Isa. liii. 11). "The prince of this world came," but "had nothing in Him," (John xiv. 30). He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," (chapt. vii. 26). Even the onsets of the Devil never prevailed to shake his virtue or to taint his purity, sorely though they vexed his generous and pious soul. His human tastes and susceptibilities rendered Him subject to temptation; but his moral purity and power disposed and enabled Him to overcome it. And as his sinlessness affords to men a bright and beautiful example, so it has much to do with the faithful and successful discharge of his sacerdotal work. "Such an high-priest became us," (chapt. vii. 26). He "offered himself without spot unto God," (chapt. ix. 14). His blood was that of "a Lamb without blemish and without spot," (1 Peter i. 19).

II. Certain corresponding duties are here prescribed to the Hebrew Christians.

1. They are required to "hold fast their profession."

They professed Christianity. That noble and precious system they were to adhere to in life and death. What had blessed them in the past, they were to use as the means of blessing for the future. With tenacious grasp, they were to "hold it fast." This they were to do by a decided faith and a bold profession, vigorous

resistance to the influences that were fitted to seduce them from either, and energetic application of the proper means of attaching them to both.

2. They were to “come boldly to the throne of grace, that they might obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

The word “throne” represents God as a King; and the supplementary words, “of grace,” represent Him as, in that character, exercising kindness and dispensing benefits. The whole phrase, “the throne of grace,” is admirably fitted to enforce the procedure here described—that of coming, and of coming boldly, into the presence of God.

The most direct and obvious method of “coming to the throne” is to engage, really and in right earnest, in prayer and supplication to that gracious King. The boldness required is, of course, quite distinct from presumption, and must be associated with pious reverence. Even God’s own children must approach Him with sacred awe. “He is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are about him,” (Psalm lxxxix. 7). He says, “I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me,” (Levit. x. 3). The very goodness of God, and the very privileges enjoyed by believers, are suggested as reasons for serving Him with reverence. It is foretold, “The children of Israel shall fear the Lord, and *his goodness*, in the latter days,” (Hos. iii. 5); and in this very Epistle it is said:—“Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire,” (chapt. xii. 28, 29). Even the reference in the present passage to

men's "need" of "grace," and "mercy," intimates that they must exercise humility and awe when they approach the infinitely perfect One. But still, "boldness" is permitted and required in doing so. The petitioner must be free from distrust and jealousy of God. God is both able and willing to afford the needful help; and He has pledged himself to lend a favourable ear to genuine prayer. Of these things the petitioner must be assured; and to his faith on the subject his feelings must correspond. As with gratitude, so with boldness, he must ask of Heaven. It is for the glory of God, and for his own comfort and encouragement, that he should thus approach "the throne."

At that throne, "mercy" and "grace" are to be sought. It certainly is not necessary to restrict the reference of the word "mercy" to the pardon of sin. But still, this gift is introductory to others; and while we need, as the commencement of personal salvation, to be justified by faith and reconciled to God, we also need, after justification, to approach the mercy-seat with the petition, "Forgive us our trespasses." The expression rendered, "to help in time of need," (*εἰς ἔνκαιρον βοήθειαν*) might be more strictly translated *for seasonable succour*. "Grace to help" is what we "need" at every "time;" although there are some seasons when the urgency is peculiarly great, such as, the time of strong temptation, the time of severe affliction, and the time of death. That needful grace is to be sought, and can be found, at the throne whose very name is "the throne of grace." How meet to ask, how important to obtain, that grace—grace to think aright, grace to feel aright, grace to

speaking aright, grace to act aright, grace to suffer aright, grace to die aright!

III. The duties here prescribed are enforced by the doctrines here propounded.

The connection is obvious. If Christ be such as in this passage He is said to be; surely the sinner should embrace, and the believer should "hold fast," that religion of which Christ is the Author, the Foundation, the Centre, and the Crown—and surely also, men may go, with the "boldness" and confidence of faith, and ask "mercy" and "grace" from God! The same duties are enforced by like arguments in chapt. x. 19-25. These, too, are parallel passages:—Rom. v. 1, 2; Eph. ii. 18.

CHAPTER V.

1. *For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin:* 2. *Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.* 3. *And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.*

Here the sacred writer describes the high-priests of the Jewish dispensation—obviously meaning to suggest a parallelism or analogy between *them* and Jesus Christ.

I. The ancient "high-priest" was "taken from among men."

On the one hand, he was set apart from other men,

to discharge a work peculiar to himself; but on the other, he was himself a man—a member of the race on whose behalf he was called to minister. That, in the sacerdotal economy, the ordinary and regular constitution of the world might be maintained, and that there might be the freer interchange of congenial acts and exercises between the high-priest and the people, Jehovah chose and ordained that the former should be, not an angel, but a man, although, in respect of his office and work, distinct from other men.

Even so, the high-priest of the Gospel is a man, and yet in the midst of men He stands alone. His name is, “the Mighty God,” (Isa. ix. 6); and much has his Divinity to do with his efficient discharge of his priestly work. But as a priest, He had to suffer and die; and therefore, in his marvellous condescension and mercy, He became a man. As a priest, too, it was eminently desirable, in order to human confidence, that He should, from personal experience, sympathize with men in their infirmities; and therefore, He assumed “a true body and a reasonable soul.” And yet He occupies a place which is occupied by none of the sons of men besides. Though “for men,” and from the midst of men, He stands, as it were, apart.

II. The high-priest “was ordained for men in things pertaining to God.”

He was “ordained”—by God and by man He was chosen and set apart. The choice and ordination were “for”—on behalf of—“men;” He was meant to represent the persons, to plead the cause, and to promote the welfare, of other men. The department in which, as thus ordained, He was to execute this merciful and generous design, was that of “things pertaining to

God ;” He was to deal with Jehovah on behalf of men in respect of sin, which violated the law of God—and in the form of sacrifice, which was offered up to God.

Even so, the high-priest of the Gospel is ordained—“chosen of God,” (1 Peter ii. 4), and “anointed with the Holy Ghost,” (Acts x. 38); He is thus ordained “for men”—to make expiation for human sin, to work out salvation for human souls, to sympathize with human sorrow, and to sanctify and comfort his human friends; and He is thus “ordained for men *in things pertaining to God*”—for sin, propitiation, pardon, and eternal life, are all essentially and necessarily associated with the Divine Being—sin, as the transgression of his law—propitiation, as satisfaction to his righteousness—pardon, as his generous act—eternal life, as his inestimably precious gift.

III. To the high-priest it pertained “to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin.”

It is obvious that the two words “gifts” and “sacrifices” are meant, when taken together, to comprehend both the bloody and the bloodless offerings which, under the Hebrew Economy, it fell to the high-priest to present. Christ’s death is habitually represented in Scripture as constituting his atoning sacrifice; and the analogy of the passage does not necessarily require that we should be able to specify any other sacrifice as presented by our “great high-priest.” But, in ver. 7, the sacrificial word “offered” is applied to his “prayers and supplications,” as well as to his “strong crying and tears.”

IV. The high-priest, being “himself compassed with infirmity,” was to “have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that were out of the way.”

Weak himself, he was to pity the weak. Sinful

himself, he was to yearn over the sinner. Himself exposed to suffering, he was to deal mercifully with the sufferer. Here, too, there was an analogy to the case of Christ. In respect of his human nature, Christ was feeble. In his body, He endured pain. In his soul, He was "exceeding sorrowful." Thus can He sympathize with weakness, pain, and sorrow. And, although absolutely sinless, He bore the burden of sin, and realized, as it were, the sins of the chosen as his own, so as, even in this awful matter, from what of sin He has himself experienced, to compassionate, as well as blame, the sinner, and, in all the temptations of his believing followers, to afford them the assurance that his fraternal heart beats in sympathy with theirs.

V. The high-priest, by reason of "his infirmity," required "to offer for himself," as well as for the people.

As dependent on God, he was called to render him the corresponding offering. As a transgressor of God's law, he was called to seek forgiveness through the appointed sacrifice. Here, assuredly, the analogy between Christ and the ancient high-priests is not complete. Christ, however, as a man, was dependent on God, and to God presented prayer and praise; and Christ, though sinless, took the sinner's place, and, by the offering of himself, threw off, as it were, the tremendous load He bore.

4. And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. 5. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee. 6. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.

The high-priesthood is here represented as an "honour." Its aim was noble, its functions were dignified, and its immunities were great. This "honour" no one was, at his own mere option, to assume. The office, which God himself appointed, God was himself to fill with appropriate men. That prerogative He claimed; and although there may, at certain periods of degeneracy, have been a breach of his authoritative arrangements in the matter, yet his appointment respecting the family from which the high-priest should be taken, and respecting the order in which members of that family should succeed to it, was very generally observed in the Church and Commonwealth of Israel.

As the Jewish high-priesthood is here represented as an "honour," so with that of Christ is associated the idea of glory. True, it involved deep humiliation, and awful suffering, on *his* part. But there was great moral glory in being invested with the office, and the faithful discharge of it reflected eternal honour on Him who bore it. Yet Christ, it is here affirmed, did not arrogate the office or the honour to himself, but was called by the Father to the work, and crowned by the Father with the glory. In connection with this Divine appointment, two texts are quoted from the Psalms; and the connection in which they here occur plainly shows, that, as that from the 110th, so also that from the 2d Psalm—"Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee"—relates to the investiture of Christ, by his eternal Father, with the office of high-priesthood. The Messianic character of the 2d Psalm has been vindicated under chapt. i. 5; the Messianic reference of the 110th, under chapt. i. 13. A detailed comparison between Christ and Melchisedec is carried on in chapt. vii.

7. *Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; 8. Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; 9. And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; 10. Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.*

The "days of Christ's flesh" were the days of his humbled humanity. The period so described is thus contradistinguished from that of his pre-existent state—when He had no humanity at all, but, as the second Person of the Trinity, was a purely spiritual Essence; and also from that of his present condition—in which, real and material though, of course, his glorified body be, his human nature cannot be fitly called "flesh," for "Flesh and blood," says the apostle, (1 Cor. xv. 50), "cannot inherit the kingdom of God."

The "prayers and supplications" which, "in the days of his flesh," Jesus offered up to God were both on his own behalf and on behalf of his chosen people. Instances of both kinds are recorded in the Gospels. The connection in the present instance indicates that the "prayers and supplications" more particularly meant are those which He presented in the garden and on the cross. With the same awful and memorable scenes the "strong crying and tears" also fall to be associated; and the sacred records of what transpired in both are the best keys wherewith to unlock the dreadful import of the words. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," (Matt. xxvi. 38); "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," (Matt. xxvi. 39); "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

(Matt. xxvii. 46)—these exclamations may teach us what is meant, alike by the “prayers and supplications,” and by the “strong crying and tears.” And one proof that this is a right interpretation lies in the title here given to God—“Him that was able to save Him from death.”

But how did the Father “hear” the Son, when the former, in point of fact, left the latter to die—when, indeed, “it pleased the Lord to bruise” Messiah? (Is. liii. 10). God may accept a prayer, even when He does not literally grant the thing asked. But, in Christ’s case, the Father *did* give Him what He asked. He asked that the will of the Father might be done; and, in the very act of bruising Him, the Father fulfilled his own plan and purpose. He asked that He might be sustained under the pressure of suffering and death; and so He magnificently was. He asked that He might not be left to linger unnecessarily long amidst the horrors of the cross; and his agonies were really cut short. He asked that, albeit through the gate of death, He might pass into a glorious life; and “the King shall joy in thy strength, O Lord, and in thy salvation how greatly shall He rejoice! Thou hast given him his heart’s desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. . . . He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest it Him, even length of days for ever and ever. His glory is great in thy salvation; honour and majesty hast thou laid upon Him. Thou hast made him most blessed for ever; Thou hast made Him exceeding glad with thy countenance,” (Psalm xxi. 1, 2, 4-6).

Christ is here said to have been “heard *in that He feared.*” The original expression (*ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας*) may mean, *from his fear*, or, *from that of which He was afraid.* This interpretation of the words is in accordance

with the analogy of that expression in the Psalms, "Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns," (Psalm xxii. 21), and in harmony with the fact that Christ's prayer in the Garden indicates that even *his* heroic heart had been seized with fear. But the more natural sense is, *by reason of his piety*; and, in this view, the statement expresses a sound and important idea, and is somewhat parallel to Malachi ii. 5.

It may seem strange that the sacred writer should say of Christ, that "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." But assuredly, (1.) As his sufferings were themselves obedience—in accordance with the words, "Obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," (Philip. ii. 8), and his own exclamation, "Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will, O God, yea, thy law is within my heart," (Psalm xl. 8; Heb. x. 5-10)—so, in suffering, He was conscious of obeying, and experimentally realized obedience; and, (2.) Although Christ "did no sin," He was, in his human spirit, finite, and as, in early life, He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man," (Luke ii. 52), so He was, afterwards, susceptible of new impressions, and capable of fresh attainments, in so far as his human nature was concerned, and may, therefore, by suffering, have acquired more distinct, and vivid, and comprehensive views of the nature, the obligation, the importance, and the means of obedience to his Father's will. O how desirable that, as suffering led to such practical results in Christ's case, it should lead to similar results in ours! Many and precious are the lessons respecting the laws of God, and the duty of men, to be learned in the school of affliction.

In his humanity, as in his Divinity, Christ was, in

one sense, uniformly *perfect*. But still, his attainments were progressive, and, until his sufferings produced their glorious effects upon his mind, the climax of his progress was not fully realized. Besides, his accomplishment as a Saviour—the completion of the earthly portion, including the discharge of the atoning function, of his priesthood—depended on his death, and was not thoroughly fulfilled until He had endured it. Thus are to be understood the words, “being made perfect.”

How, in connection with this attainment, Christ is “the Author” of “salvation” is manifest. In becoming “obedient unto death,” He purchased and provided it; and, by dying, He entered on an endless and majestic life, in possession of which He pleads his people’s cause at the Father’s throne, and himself, as Mediatorial King, bestows “salvation manifold.” The “salvation” of which He is “the Author” is here called “eternal.” As it supplies the complete nature with its glorious treasures, so it is commensurate, in the experience of believers, with the endless duration of their souls. They who enjoy it are denoted by the expression, “all them that obey him;” and it is a great and monitory truth, that, although men are “saved by grace,” and “justified by faith,” yet, as is taught in a mighty multitude of passages, they who are in a state of salvation, they who are justified, are obedient to Christ, and, while they rest their hopes upon his sacrifice, take his example and his law as a guide and standard for their lives. The faith which justifies the sinner “purifies the heart;” and grace, in saving, sanctifies. Christ is a King as well as a High-priest; and he who is sprinkled with his propitiatory blood yields meek and willing subjection to his sceptre. It is, however, more especially of his

priesthood that the sacred writer is now discoursing ; and again he introduces the representation of Christ—already suggested, and in a subsequent part of the Epistle developed and explained—as “ called of God an high-priest after the order of Melchizedec.”

11. *Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.* 12. *For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God ; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.* 13. *For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness ; for he is a babe.* 14. *But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

Here the sacred writer affirms, first of all, that he has “ many things to say ” about Melchizedec. Melchizedec is a remarkable historical character. In an early period of the world, he acted a distinguished part ; and his name and history are intimately associated with those of the *father of the faithful*. As, in the distance, and from the midst of surrounding darkness, some giant-hill erects its stately form, and flashes its snowy radiance on the eye ; so, through the vista of ages and generations, and high above the mists that have wrapped so many ancient men and things in impenetrable shade, Melchizedec appears—a great and venerable form. Moreover, that regal high-priest, as, in this very Epistle, we are so clearly and copiously taught, was the symbol and representative of Christ. In a variety of points, he bore a striking analogy to *Him*, “ the Priest upon his throne,” (Zech. vi. 13). He who “ knoweth the end

from the beginning" willed and ordained that the history and work of that remarkable ancient should foreshadow to "the grey fathers of the world" the promised Christ, and should serve, to *us*, in these later ages, the high and practical design of showing the Divine connection that subsists among the great moral Economies of God—the Patriarchal, the Jewish, and the Christian. "Many things" foolish and absurd have been said about Melchizedec, by religious sceptics, on the one hand, and by speculative Christians, on the other. Not such are the "things" which the sacred writer had "to say." Curious and useless questions respecting this patriarchal high-priest he avoids; but he sought to exhibit him, in his historical character and in his typical relation, clearly and impressively, before the Christian Hebrews.

And yet, he intimates that what he had to say about Melchizedec it was difficult to express so as to be distinctly understood. Obscurity, in the case of religious truth, arises from various sources. In religion, infinite objects are presented to finite minds. There are certain celestial and transcendental things which human language is not able fully to express. In some minds there are, intellectually, great natural or educational defects. Finally — and this is the case specially referred to here — many men are "dull of hearing:" cold indifference, or moral indolence, or distorting prejudice, or some such sinful cause, raises a mighty barrier between the truth of God and the mind of man. How meet, how desirable, that we should have the avenues of our own souls clear and open for the entrance of the sacred light, and that we should seek to remove, in so far as our instrumentality may be avail-

able, the obstructions in the case of other souls, to an intelligent and comprehensive faith !

Did, then, the sacred writer refrain from discoursing on Melchizedec, seeing so many of those whom he addressed were "dull of hearing?" No; he forthwith proceeds to speak largely on the subject. But must not this, in the circumstances, have been a useless and unprofitable task? No; not at all. (1.) There were probably some among the Hebrews very willing to observe, and morally able to understand, what he had to say about Melchizedec. (2.) He did not regard those whom he charges with being "dull of hearing" as hopelessly and incurably negligent; and, no doubt, he hoped and expected that what he says, in the form of warning and admonition, before going on to discourse respecting Melchizedec, would have a good effect upon their minds. (3.) Even the presentation of certain subjects to certain minds in a way which they do not completely understand, may tend to arrest their attention, to elevate their aims, and to stir their energies. (4.) This Epistle was designed for the general and permanent instruction of the Church.

Still, they who were so "dull of hearing" are blamed for their past remissness, and for their low attainments. "For the time," says their firm, but kind, instructor, "ye ought to be teachers." In the case of many of them, a considerable period had elapsed since they were first taught the elements of religious truth, and even since they first came into contact with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That period had been surcharged with privileges—privileges which they had been under very tender and stringent obligations to improve. Surely, then, they ought by this time to have been able to be

themselves instructors of others in religious truth. Nay, as is here said, they "ought to have been teachers." It cannot be supposed, indeed, that they should all have become ministers, or public teachers, of Christianity. But religious instruction—the communication of sacred truth to others—was what devolved on all of them. They should, themselves intelligent in religion, have been now pouring out the treasures of their souls into the ears and minds of others. As parents, masters, neighbours, and friends, they should have been, with well-instructed and well-furnished minds, seeking to do good, and actually doing good, to the young, the ignorant, and the unconcerned. A monitory lesson this, (1.) To persons who are not competent to teach; and (2.) To persons who, being competent, neglect the honourable and important work.

The sacred writer, with characteristic honesty and fidelity, tells the Hebrews, not only what they should be, but also what they are. And, in doing so, he represents Revelation as "the Oracles of God" and "the word of righteousness."

"The Oracles of God" is a very arresting and illustrious name. And yet, it accurately indicates the real character of what prophets and apostles teach. Heaven's inspiration was poured upon their minds, and guided, as well as animated, their voices and their pens. What *they* declare Jehovah speaks. O with what reverence, and attention, and faith, and obedience, and grateful praises, should we receive and study the heavenly message! and how seriously and vividly, as both a motive and a check in dealing with the Scriptures, should we realize the thought:—These are "the Oracles of God!" They are, moreover, "the word of

righteousness." The Bible clearly, comprehensively, and authoritatively propounds the principles, and prescribes the rules, of piety and virtue ; and, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, it is the instrument of producing these great attainments in the heart and character of men. What a noble distinction of "the Oracles of God!" and how important faithfully to use them in this practical relation! If the knowledge and attainment of "righteousness" be momentous and valuable things, O let us highly esteem, and diligently use, what is here significantly called "the word of righteousness."

It is suggested in this passage, that there is great inequality among professing Christians to whom "the Oracles of God" have come.

Some, it is here said, are "babes," and others, men ; some, such as can digest "strong meat," others, such as "have need of milk ;" some, "unskilful in the word of righteousness," others, "by reason of use having their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." In other words, some are comparatively ignorant, inexperienced, and unsettled, in religion, while others are comparatively intelligent, vigorous, and accomplished ; and, while the latter can understand, and appreciate, and apply the more difficult and abstruse doctrines of Revelation, the former are more exclusively dependent, for the sustentation and improvement of their souls, on the simpler elements of religious truth.

It is suggested still further, that "the Oracles of God" have appliances appropriate for both classes.

Revelation, as some one has graphically said, "has fords which a lamb can wade and depths which an elephant can swim." It is a comfortable thought that the truths constituting that Gospel which justifying faith

appropriates and embraces are very simple. For all classes of Christians, these it is of peculiar importance to bring, and to keep, before the mind. But there are kindred, though more abstruse, truths which the more vigorous and intelligent members of the Church should study and attend to; and, even in teaching simpler and less experienced Christians, judicious means should be employed to guide and animate them onwards towards the more arduous heights of that noble system of sacred truth which God, in wisdom and condescension, has been pleased to construct.

CHAPTER VI.

1. *Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,* 2. *Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.* 3. *And this will we do, if God permit.*

Here the sacred writer applies the practical and monitory views propounded in the closing verses of the preceding chapter. The connection is indicated by the introductory word "Therefore."

When he speaks of "leaving the principles," that is, the first elements, "of the doctrine of Christ," (*τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον*), he certainly does not mean to suggest that the elementary articles of Christianity may be neglected or overlooked. "By these things men live, and in them is the life of their soul." On the

simpler principles of the Christian religion man depends for moral nutriment, encouragement, and comfort. Now, if such effects are to be derived from them, they must be habitually kept before the mind ; and that men may understand them, and have them permanently impressed upon their hearts, it is important that they should, often and repeatedly, be set forth before them. But still, it is important and desirable that men should not satisfy themselves with the knowledge and faith of these elementary principles ; and the sacred writer here inculcates an advance from these to the more difficult and abstruse doctrines of religion, and the association with the former of those supplementary truths without which Christianity, as a system, is dwarfed and incomplete. This is what the nature and authority of the Christian Revelation, and a regard to one's own personal improvement and public usefulness, imperatively require.

Some suppose the meaning of the words, "let us go on unto perfection," to be, *let us now proceed to a statement and discussion of the higher principles*. But "perfection," and the Greek word thus rendered (*τελειότητα*)—more especially when compared with the corresponding adjective (*τέλειος*), as used in chapt. v. 14—appear to denote a personal attainment, intellectual and moral. Moreover, according to this latter view, the warning against apostacy in ver. 4-8 is specially appropriate. On the other hand, those words in ver. 5, "And this will we do, if God permit," are somewhat in favour of the former interpretation. Between the sentiments evolved by the two respective methods there is an intimate and practical connection. If ministers must proceed, in their instructions, from the lower to the more advanced principles of revealed religion, it is that the people may be

carried onwards towards "perfection." If the people must thus make progress, ministers must seek, by the progressive course of their ministrations, to carry them along. Virtually at least, both classes are included in the admonition, "let us go on unto perfection."

Some of the elementary principles of religion are here specified. From the fact that, in this enumeration, the word for "doctrine" is not introduced until "baptisms" are specified, and that the word actually *does* occur at that point of the series, Ebrard, a recent interpreter of this Epistle, infers that it is not of the doctrinal articles of "repentance from dead works and faith toward God," but of the repentance and faith themselves, that the sacred writer speaks at the two first steps of the succession. But the common idea that he refers to doctrinal articles throughout is favoured by the preceding expression, ver. 1, "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ." Probably the use of the word "doctrine" in connection with "baptisms" was occasioned by the fact that, whereas repentance and faith toward God were definite and determinate articles of faith, "baptisms"—including Jewish baptism, John's baptism, and Christian baptism—did not, like each of those other particulars, constitute a single, distinct, uncontroverted, and universally acknowledged point of religious knowledge and belief.

The six particulars here specified may be naturally classified in three pairs.

I. "Repentance from dead works, and faith toward God."

The works of unconverted men—who are themselves "dead in trespasses and sins"—are dead. Like the body bereft of the soul, works wanting inward piety

lack vitality. Very generally they are essentially and thoroughly wrong, as if involving the very corruption of death; and even where, in their matter, they are in accordance with the law of God, they are destitute of the principle of spiritual life. They to whom the practice of such works pertains need "repentance" (*μετανοία*)—a decided change of heart; and such a change secures the deliverance of the sinner from the "dead works" by which he was previously characterized. Thenceforth, he himself is "alive to God," and his works, like his renovated soul, are lively, living things. The nature, necessity, and effects, of this repentance are exhibited in the following, among other, texts:—Isa. lv. 7; Luke xiii. 3; John iii. 3; Acts xi. 18, xvii. 30; Rom. vi. 18; Eph. ii. 10.

With "repentance" is here associated "faith toward God." The doctrine of a God is the first principle, whether of Natural, or of Revealed, Religion. Revelation not only teaches us that there is a God, but explains who and what He is. Its exhibitions on the subject must be received and embraced by "faith." That faith must be distinguished from the faith of the Pagan, with his "gods many and lords many"—and also from the faith of the unconverted Jews, who failed to recognize Jehovah as "God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."

II. "The doctrine of baptisms, and laying on of hands."

This branch of Revelation may appear, and is, in some sort, secondary and subordinate. But still, God chose that they who received his Gospel should avouch themselves believers by the sacrament of Baptism, and also that, not only should private Christians, by the

imposition of hands, receive miraculous gifts, but men duly called and qualified should, by a like ritual, be set apart to ministerial work, (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Acts ii. 38, 41, viii. 14-19, xix. 1-6, xxii. 16; 1 Tim. iv. 14, v. 22). The prescriptions of Christ and the apostles on these subjects it was necessary and incumbent to observe; and they constituted elementary parts of the Christian religion. In the Old Testament, the imposition of hands is specified, Num. xxvii. 18, 23; Deut. xxxiv. 9.

III. "Resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment."

The former of these articles was a stranger to the Heathen creeds; and even Pagan Philosophy seems scarcely ever to have hinted it. But in the Old Testament, and still more in the New, it is clearly revealed by God, (Dan. xii. 2, 3; John v. 28, 29, vi. 39, 40; Acts xxiv. 14, 15; 1 Cor. xv. 12-57; Philip. iii. 20, 21). As Christ was raised, so shall his believing people rise. Yea, "all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." An increase of glory to the saint, and an increase of perdition to the sinner, shall be realized by the resurrection of their buried dust. The grave-yard is, what it is called in some parts of the Continent of Europe, *God's Acre*. There He sows his seed, and there will He bring forth his harvest. The seed is the buried dead; the harvest is the multitude of reviving and rising human frames.

It has been supposed, that "resurrection of the dead" denotes exclusively the glorious resurrection of the saints, and also, that "eternal judgment" means exclusively the everlasting punishment of the wicked.

In this comprehensive summary, it is better to apply both expressions to men in general.

Nature, Reason, Conscience speaks of a "judgment to come." On that solemn subject, Revelation, faithful to the souls of men and to the authority of God, is explicit and express. That there will be a final assize—that God will, there and then, by Jesus Christ, make inquisition on all souls—that "according to the deeds done in the body" will men's destinies for eternity be sealed—and that the wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal," are "the true and faithful sayings of God," (Eccles. xii. 14; Matt. xxv. 31-46; Acts xvii. 31; Rom. ii. 3-16; 2 Thess. i. 5-10; Rev. xx. 11-15). The truth on this solemn and momentous subject is the last of the examples given in the present passage of the elementary principles of religion.

The principles thus specified are here called a "foundation." On these the other articles of Christianity depend. On these the soul itself must build its faith and confidence. In the case of the Christian Hebrews, however, that foundation had been already laid; and their wise and authoritative instructor wished that, in *their* case, there should be no cause nor occasion for laying it again. The word rendered "laying" (*καταβαλλόμενοι*) may certainly mean, *prostrating* or *casting down*; and in this sense Ebrard understands it here. But it is not natural to speak of casting down a *foundation*, and to this meaning the word "again" (*παλι*) is decidedly opposed. Still, the sacred writer wished the Christian Hebrews to retain the foundation as well as to rear the superstructure. Very unwilling was he that, having learned "the prin-

ciples of the doctrine of Christ," they should forget them, or that, having embraced these truths, they should forsake them. What they had thus learned, he would have them to remember; what they had thus embraced, he would have them to retain. That it would be so he hoped and expected; and to promote so desirable a result, and to carry them on towards perfection, were objects which he meant to seek. *He* and *they*, however, were alike dependent on a higher Power; and the dependence of both he piously expresses by the phrase "if God permit."

Happy the Christian who, protected by the providence, and guided by the grace, of the great Father-Spirit, "goes on to perfection," becoming wiser as he becomes older, and proceeding "from strength to strength." And a noble thing it is, by counsel, example, and instruction, to carry on the souls of others in the course of religious knowledge and practical obedience.

4. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, 5. And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 6. If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

What is said in the previous context respecting steadfastness and progress in religion is here enforced by the representation of a fearful case. The connection is indicated by the introductory word "For."

Of course, this passage must not be so interpreted as to contradict the doctrine of the perseverance of the

saints. That doctrine, explicitly propounded in other Books of Scripture, (Prov. iv. 18; John x. 28-30; &c.), is recognized in this very chapter, ver. 9, 18; and it is virtually involved in the promise of God to each of his believing people, chapt. xiii. 5, "I will never leave thee; no, never, never (οὐδ' οὐ μὴ) forsake thee." The reconciliation is to be secured on the principle, that what is said in this passage about the attainments of the person supposed to "fall away," does not necessarily imply justifying faith or genuine conversion.

Several attainments are here specified.—These persons "were once enlightened;" at one time, they possessed considerable knowledge of Christianity—knowledge which might even, in some degree, rouse their consciences and melt their hearts.—They had "tasted of the heavenly gift;" that "gift of God" of which St. Peter says, that it cannot "be purchased with money" (Acts viii. 20)—the Holy Ghost—had been poured out, in his common influences, and, it might be, in his miraculous gifts, upon them, and they had personally experienced that sacred effusion, that gratuitous outpouring (δωρεῖσθαι) from on high.—They "were" even "made partakers of the Holy Ghost;" the gift which God bestowed, his own Holy Spirit, they had themselves, in consequence, possessed—not, indeed, in his converting grace, but in a way, and to an extent, which gave them a great advantage, and involved a corresponding responsibility.—They "had tasted the good word of God;" that is, as Theodoret and others interpret the expressions, God's promises had been in some measure fulfilled to them, or, to adopt a more natural mode of explaining them, The word of God—a word that was

eminently wise and pure and faithful, and, when known and believed, very profitable and pleasant to the soul—had come to them, and they themselves had, not, indeed, digested it, as they should have done, but “tasted” it—examined it, and, in some measure, applied it too.—They “had tasted the powers of the world to come;” the Christian Economy—here called “the world to come,” in accordance with a Jewish mode of expressing the Dispensation of Messiah, to which the sacred writer of this Epistle conforms when, specifying the subject of his discourse, he says, chapt. ii. 5, “the world to come, whereof we speak”—this new and evangelical Economy was charged with sacred influences, and in these the persons here described had partially shared, feeling, perhaps, tenderly affected by its threatenings and its promises, or even, it might be, under certain impressions produced upon their minds by means of it, renouncing some bad practices and habits to which they had been addicted.

And yet, it is supposed that these persons might “fall away,” (*παραπισόντας*). The expression is not simply, “fall.” Believers themselves may fall. Alas, alas, if, after doing so, they could never be restored! The phrase is, “fall away;” and it denotes the case of such as, after large attainments, and considerable experience, in Christianity, renounce it, bid it away from them, discard and renounce it as a false and worthless thing.

Such persons are said to “crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” They virtually do what his murderers literally did. They say that Christ was a blasphemer and a deceiver, and that He deserved to die. They insult his sacred

person, dishonour his glorious name, and, as it were, murder Him in circumstances of fearful aggravation, because in renunciation of lofty professions which they themselves had made, and of distinguished privileges which they themselves had enjoyed. O flagrant guilt! tremendous wickedness! Must He who, in such mercy on *his own* part, and such cruelty on *man's*, was crucified erewhile, be crucified again! Must He who was earth's insult once, and is heaven's worship now, be still, in a world where his marvellous love was shown, and by men who have heard his Gospel, beheld his beauty, and professed his faith, be "put to an open shame!"

Of the men here described, it is said, "It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." What! are not the offers of the Gospel free to all? and even at the eleventh hour, may not the vilest sinner accept of salvation, if he will? O yes. "Ho, every one that thirsteth," is still the call; and "whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," (Isa. lv. 1; Rev. xxii. 17). But still, God has his own counsels and decrees respecting sinners as well as saints; and, in accordance with the natural constitution and operations of the human mind, there is a point in the obduration of the heart, and resistance to truth clearly taught and evidence distinctly apprehended, at which repentance, nay, the very restoration to a moral condition now utterly abandoned and renounced, is a hopeless, an awfully hopeless, thing. O let us not trifle with religious professions, with religious privileges, with religious attainments, with religious experience; and "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," (1 Cor. x. 12).

7. *For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: 8. But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.*

Reason and Scripture combine to teach us that, in the days of innocence, the world, or at least that part of it which was inhabited by man, was richly clothed with vegetable beauty. Fair and fragrant flowers blossomed at our first father's feet; and trees of richest foliage spread their grateful shade, and hung out their pleasant fruits, over his kingly and consecrated head. But this was part of the curse denounced on Adam when innocence was gone:—"Thorns and thistles shall the earth bring forth unto thee," (Gen. iii. 18). This part of it, like all the rest, has been fulfilled. The soil left without cultivation runs to weeds; and even where Agriculture has won its richest triumphs, "thorns and briers" still rear their heads.

These vegetable processes and contrasts are so striking in themselves, so familiar to the eye, and so similar to certain processes and contrasts in the moral world, that, in a book so figurative as the Bible, they might be expected to be found employed as illustrations of sacred truth. In the Psalms, accordingly, in the writings of the Prophets, in the discourses of Christ, and even in the New Testament Epistles, they are so applied. One example occurs in the present passage.

I. A favourable case is stated:—"The earth which drinketh in the rain," &c.

"The earth" obviously denotes the human soul. This is clear from the nature of the case, and from the parallel passage in the Parable of the Sower, (Matt.

xiii. 3-9, 18-23). "The rain" must needs denote certain influences brought to bear upon the soul. In realizing man's heart as soil, and his character and conduct as herbs or fruits, one is almost necessarily led to the conception of seed as deposited in the soil. This seed must, of course, be the word of God. That word, then, can scarcely be included in the rain; which must be the representative of those appliances of providence and grace by which the word takes effect, and, in cases of conversion, produces "the fruits of righteousness." The expression "drinketh in,"—a beautiful image used in a similar way, Eurip. *Hec.* 390; Senec. *Herc. in Oeta*, 666—denotes the earnestness with which those appliances are received and employed, and the intimate connection into which they are brought with the soul described. The "herbs" represent the practical products of the word of God thus applied—right thoughts, and feelings, and words, and practices. These are morally fair, and morally useful; they are also, as is here intimated, "meet for them by whom" or rather, *on whose account* (*δι' ὧς*, not *δι' ἧν*), the soil "is dressed." These attainments, besides being profitable to good men themselves, are conformable to God's law, grateful to God's heart, and glorifying to God's name. From Him, it is said, in conclusion, the watered and fruitful soil "receiveth blessing." The moral, like the natural, soil, must, in this case, have been blessed by God, else it would never have drunk in the rain and brought forth the herbs. Its fruitfulness depends on the Divine benediction—"God giveth the increase," (1 Cor. iii. 7). But, as is here clearly indicated, there is a blessing superinduced on the fruitfulness. God approves that fruitfulness; "to him that hath He giveth more,"

(Matt. xiii. 12); and, although the heavenly glory be the gift of grace, it is also a "recompence of reward," (Matt. v. 12; Col. iii. 24; Heb. x. 35, xi. 26).

II. An unfavourable case is stated:—"But that which beareth thorns and briers," &c.

Unprofitable hearers of the word are elsewhere compared to the barren fig-tree, (Luke xiii. 6-9). But he who is *negatively*, is always *positively*, bad. He who brings not forth *good*, always brings forth *bad*, fruit. "Thorns and briers" represent wicked thoughts, and feelings, and words, and actions. These are so called as being mean, vile, and noxious. To the soil which produces "thorns and briers" the apostates described in the previous context certainly belong; but so also do all impenitent and unbelieving sinners. The seed of the word, as the Parable of the Sower intimates, may have been cast abroad upon them; moreover, rain may have fallen upon them in frequent showers: but the latter has been resisted, the former has failed to germinate, and accordingly, what should have been covered with graceful plants rich in foliage and plentiful in fruit, is occupied and deformed by "thorns and briers"—the natural products of a "heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Grotius points out a striking and expressive distinction between the two words employed in this passage to denote the production, respectively, of suitable and profitable "herbs," and of "briers and thorns," (*τίκτουσα* and *ἐκφέρουσα*). As to the experience and destiny of the sinner here compared to a bad soil, three things are affirmed. (1.) He is "rejected;" he is already disapproved and disowned (*ἀδόκιμος*) by God. (2.) He is "nigh unto cursing;" the doom which hands over the sinner to eternal death is

ready to be pronounced upon him. The "cursing" of this part of the passage is antithetical to the "blessing" of the former part of it. There is perhaps a reference to Christ cursing the barren fig-tree, (Mark xi. 13, 14, 20, 21). (3.) His "end is to be burned;" the final issue and consummation which a corrupt and unprofitable soul, if it continue as it is, is sure to realize is everlasting destruction—"the worm that dieth not, and the fire which is not quenched." There is probably here a reference to the ancient, and not obsolete, custom, among agriculturists, of burning barren fields. So Virg., *Georg.* i. 85. In the Bible, fire is habitually used to denote penal suffering and ruin, (Psalm xcvi. 3; Isa. lxvi. 24; Matt iii. 10, xxv. 41, Rev. xxi. 8; &c.)

What solemn admonition does this latter part of the representation, and what sweet encouragement does the former part of it, afford! Are we bringing forth the appropriate "herbs," or are we yielding the "thorns and briers"—*we* who have been so favourably tended—*we* among whom the seed has been so liberally cast, and on whom the rain has so copiously fallen? In answering this question, let us not be deceived by mere superficial appearances. Natural kindness and outward decency are no sure evidences of "a field which the Lord hath blessed," and which the Lord approves. A pretty plant may spring beneath the shadow of the "brier;" a pleasant flower may even blossom on the branches of the "thorn." Yet still, the thorn is but a thorn, the brier is but a brier, and the soil which they cover has run to waste, is lost to its higher uses, and is marked out, for clearance and conflagration, by the wise and cautious husbandman.

9. *But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.*

10. *For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*

“Beloved” is a frequent salutation in the Epistles of the New Testament. The sacred writer was perhaps the rather led to use it here, as he might seem to have been expressing some suspicion, or even throwing some blame, on the Christian Hebrews in what he had just been saying.

He here expresses a favourable opinion of those to whom he writes. And both to form and to indicate such an opinion of a person, or a class of persons, when it is really warranted by the truth of things, is right and reasonable. A true Christian, as such, has special claims upon us; the discharge of our duty to *him* and to others must be determined by the estimate we form of them; and by assuring a believer of our favourable persuasion respecting him, we may both encourage him in his Christian course, and prepare the way for finding fault with him, should that be necessary.

The comparative “better” in the phrase “better things,” has obviously reference to the wicked character and wretched condition described in ver. 8. Personal religion, and the favour and friendship of God, were better things by far; and of these the sacred writer was persuaded in the case of those whom he now addressed, and over whose spiritual welfare his spirit yearned so tenderly. The corresponding phrase, “things that accompany salvation,” indicates, what other texts explicitly and distinctly teach, that a state of personal salvation is associated with certain things the want of which

implies its absence, and the possession of which implies its presence. Such things are faith in Christ, love to that blessed Saviour, and genuine spirituality of mind, (John iii. 14-18, xxi. 15-17; Rom. viii. 5-14; 1 Cor. xvi. 22; Eph. vi. 24).

These Christians gave themselves to "work." Active and practical exertions, indeed, when the case admits of them, are essential to personal Christianity. Their "labour" is here attributed to "love;" and this soft and sacred principle is well fitted alike to prompt, to sustain, to sweeten, and to sanctify, active efforts for the glory of God and the good of man. The love specified had been "shewn towards God's name." God himself was one special object towards whom it had been directed; and in loving believers, the persons spoken of had loved them for the Father's sake. Towards Him, then, they had exercised—towards Him, also, they had "shewn"—this love; for it did not sleep invisible among the secrets of their soul—it raised itself up for effort—it aimed at practical results, and performed a practical work—and, not, indeed, by ostentatious display, but, by its exertions and its fruits, it showed itself. And in what did their love appear? to what particular enterprise did it address itself? These Christian Hebrews "had ministered," and still continued to "minister," to "saints"—to pious persons who required their pecuniary or active aid. The wants of other followers of Christ who were in humble circumstances, or by whom, in some way, their help was needed, secured their sympathy, and received their succour. A meet field for Christian love to occupy! An appropriate work for Christian kindness to perform!

It is here affirmed that "God" was "not unrighteous

to forget" what these Christian Hebrews had shown and done. On this statement a very dangerous doctrine has been based—that of the merit of human works. The sacred writer, assuredly, does not here contradict, what is elsewhere taught so clearly, that works on the part of man have no merit in the sight of God. What, then, is meant? In the comprehensive sense of *righteousness*, the love, mercy, and free grace of God may be represented as elements of the moral aggregate. But "righteous" may more naturally be taken here in a less extensive reference; and certainly, although man deserves nothing good from God, yet Christ has meritoriously purchased much of good for believing men, Jehovah has accepted of the purchase-price at the Mediator's hand, and his own justice requires that, in virtue of that Mediator's work, He should bestow the purchased benefits.

11. *And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end :*
12. *That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

The phrase, "We desire," is an indication of the sacred writer's character; and the earnestness of his appeals is a beautiful comment on the words. They also indicate the greatness and importance of the object which he here expresses his desire to see fulfilled and realized.

The expression, "every one of you," shows the comprehensive range, and the individualizing definiteness, of the desire described. It is a monitory lesson to parents in reference to their children, and to ministers in reference to the people of their charge.

By the phrase "the same," it is indicated that these

Hebrew Christians had been diligent already. It must not, however, be understood to intimate that their affectionate counsellor had no wish for them to be characterized by greater diligence in religion than they had ever yet exhibited. He, assuredly, wished them to improve.

The word "shew" suggests the desirableness of diligence in religion being overtly exhibited in the course and tenor of the Christian's life. The sacred writer, of course, was an enemy to ostentation, and heartily sympathized with the doctrines on that subject propounded in the Sermon on the Mount, (Matt. vi. 1-18). But he knew that diligence, from its very nature, must be visible, where it is truly realized; and also, that the appearance of honourable and consistent diligence is fitted to arrest the attention of the world, and to excite the energies and efforts of the Church. "Let your light," said Jesus, "so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven," (Matt. v. 16).

"Full assurance of hope" is here represented as an object depending, as it obviously does, on diligence; and also as an object to be aimed at and attained. Hope—the blended expectation and desire of future good—is habitually set forth in Scripture as a thing to be desired on the part of the friends and followers of Christ, (Rom. v. 2-5, viii. 24, xii. 12, xv. 4, 13; Col. i. 23, 27; 1 Thess. v. 8; 1 Pet. i. 3, 13, 21; &c.) It is fitted to keep the believer's soul in congenial intercourse with pure and sublime realities, invisible to mortal eye—to cheer and animate him in his journey on "the narrow way"—and to bind him closer to that noble Faith which both displays the objects which Christian hope

contemplates, and awakens the principle, and the corresponding happiness, themselves. Here the wish is expressed that, in the case of the Christian Hebrews, such hope should attain to "full assurance"—should be eminently vivid and distinct and decided.

"Unto the end," points forward to the close and consummation of mortal life. Till death, diligence is needed for the discharge of the duties, and hope for the endurance of the trials, of this earthly pilgrimage. The believer must diligently work until the resting-time arrive; he must confidently hope until he enter on the fruition of a better world. So long as he lives, there is need of diligence; so long as he lives, there is need of hope; and both, if they are to be worthy of their objects, must be vigorous, decided, and intense.

The 12th verse is supplementary to the 11th, and, in some measure, explanatory of it. The caution against slothfulness might be enforced, in reference to the *moral* world as well as the *physical*, by the graphic sketch in Prov. xxiv. 30-34.

"The promises" obviously mean, the good things promised; and they "who inherit the promises" are they who have obtained the fulfilment of the Divine pledges—who now enjoy the promised portion. This they are said to do by "faith and patience." To believers, as such, the promises are given; and to *them*, as such, they are fulfilled. In the accomplishment of them, "patience" (*μακροθυμία*), as well as faith, is crowned and recompensed. And, in so far as their fulfilment is realized to believers in the present world, "faith and patience," from the nature of the case, are instruments of grasping and tasting the promised good.

To be "imitators" (*μιμηταί*) "of them" who are

thus described—including the pious patriarchs and other friends of God—it is necessary, not only to be what they were and to do what they did, but also to have their character and conduct present to the mind as a model and a guide. Such examples—as containing an embodiment of religious duty in “men of like passions as ourselves,” and as associated with tender and vivid associations, personal, domestic, or public—are particularly fitted to bear with a practical and useful impression on minds that contemplate and consider them. Ambition is bad ; and few men in the ordinary circumstances of human life can be expected to leave upon the world, for any considerable length of time, distinct and outstanding signs that they have lived. But, if we may not say, with the American poet,*—

“Lives of great men all remind us
 We may make our lives sublime,
 And, departing, leave behind us
 Footprints on the sands of time”—

yet true and impressive are his words,—

“Life is serious, life is earnest,
 And the grave is not our goal ;
 ‘Dust thou art, to dust returnest,’
 Was not spoken of the soul.”

Men have a great work to perform here ; they have a boundless eternity to enter hereafter ; and one of the means of being taught, inclined, and enabled, to discharge that work, and to prepare for this eternity, is to contemplate, as guides and models, the lives and characters of such as, “through faith and patience, inherit the promises” of God.

* Longfellow.

13. *For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, 14. Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. 15. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.*

Here is given an example of those whom, in the previous verse, the Christian Hebrews are called to imitate. There were three special reasons for selecting Abraham as that example. (1.) He was, as Scripture elsewhere intimates (John viii. 56; Rom. iv. 17-21; Heb. xi. 8-19), a very remarkable and eminent instance of "faith and patience." (2.) The Christian Hebrews stood in a very intimate relation to Abraham; descended as they were from that distinguished patriarch, and accustomed to regard him with reverence and esteem. (3.) The promise made to Abraham—embracing as it did the advent of Messiah, and the diffusion of his Gospel through the world—had a practical reference to the whole family of man.

Four things are here said of Abraham.

I. "God made promise to him."

The promise referred to is summed up in those words of ver. 14, "Surely, blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee." A more detailed development of it occurs in several passages of the Book of Genesis—for example, in chapt. xii. 2, 3. It was partly personal—relating specifically to the patriarch himself; and partly public—relating to his descendants by nature or by grace. It was partly temporal—as with respect to the multiplication of children, and the possession of the soil of Canaan; and partly spiritual—as with respect to Christ and Christianity. On the import of God's promise to Abraham light is

thrown by Rom. iv. 13-18; Gal. iii. 8; Heb. xi. 9, 10.

II. God ratified his promise to Abraham with an oath.

In Gen. xxii. 16-18, immediately after the trial of Abraham's faith in the proposed sacrifice of Isaac, Jehovah, commending the patriarch, swears that the promise shall be fulfilled to Him. Thus did He bind himself, as it were, the more to the realization of what He had previously pledged himself to do. Thus, at any rate, He gave to his faithful servant a new ground of assurance, and recompensed the fidelity of which he had lately given so remarkable a specimen.

III. "Because God could swear by no greater, He swore by himself."

Man, of course, looks up to some greater power than himself by whom to swear; and when an angel is represented in the Apocalypse as taking an oath, he is said to "swear by him that liveth for ever and ever," (Rev. x. 6). But when Jehovah swears, who is he to whom He can appeal as mightier or more glorious than himself? Nowhere in the universe of being, or in the universe of thought, can such a one be found. By himself, accordingly, He swears. "By myself have I sworn" are his words to Abraham, (Gen. xxii. 16). Other instances of a like solemn adjuration on the part of God are specified, Isa. xlv. 23; Jer. li. 14; Amos vi. 8. When Jehovah swears by himself, He virtually commits his infinite perfection—whatever constitutes Him God—to the fulfilment of what He says.

IV. "So, after Abraham had patiently endured, he obtained the promise."

The "patiently endured" of the 15th verse corre-

sponds to the "faith and patience" of the 12th. The patient endurance of Abraham implied faith—confidence in what God had said. In the exercise of that faith, he waited, earnestly but meekly, for the fulfilment of the promise. From year to year, yea, till his dying day, he thus "patiently endured." And at length "the promise—the promised good—arrived. On earth, he experienced its partial accomplishment. At death, he found a home for which he looked and longed. In Paradise, he has learned that his great descendant has visited the world—"that unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." Nor can it be reasonably doubted that, even in a higher and fuller sense than now, he will ultimately see the fulfilment of the words, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed," (Gen. xii. 3).

16. *For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.*

Among men, oaths have often been unduly multiplied. But it is a great exaggeration to say, as some have done, that the New Testament absolutely prohibits them, and that in no case should they be administered. That they are not radically, essentially, and necessarily wrong, may be gathered from the habitual use of them among the pious patriarchs, and other good men whose lives are recorded in the Old Testament, (Gen. xxiv. 2, 3, xxv. 33, xxxi. 53, xlvii. 31; Josh. xiv. 9; Psalm cxxxii. 2), and still more satisfactorily from the rules as to dispensing and receiving them prescribed by God himself in the Law of Moses, (Levit. xix 12; Deut. vi. 13). In certain texts of Isaiah relating to Christian times, it is declared, that "he who sweareth shall swear by God," and that "to Him every knee shall bow and

every tongue shall swear," (Isa. xlv. 23, lxxv. 16). When Pilate said to Jesus, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God," and Jesus answered, "Thou hast said," (Matt. xxvi. 63, 64), He may reasonably be regarded as taking an oath. Several solemn adjurations, or similar modes of speech, occur in the Epistles of St. Paul, (Rom. i. 9, ix. 1; 2 Cor. xii. 19; Gal. i. 20; 1 Tim. ii. 7). And surely, the present text seems to favour the use of an oath, in order to settle quarrels, and make an end of strife.

17. *Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; 18. That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.*

Here two things, the counsel and oath of God, are specified, and represented as "immutable things wherein it was impossible for God to lie."

The promises of God are the developments and expressions of his *counsels*. From eternity, He has formed certain plans of love and mercy; and these plans give birth and being to those verbal announcements in which He holds forth the prospect of future and eternal good. As these plans or counsels are evolved in promises, so the promises are sealed and sanctioned by an oath. In neither the counsel, as evolved in promise, nor the oath as consummating and crowning both, is it possible for God to lie. The impossibility depends upon the will. If God willed to lie—with reverence be it said—He could. But to the violation of truth his will is

absolutely, immutably, eternally opposed; and therefore, "it is impossible for Him to lie." O that the might and mastery of an honest and honourable will may constitute something like that impossibility in *us!*

Two ends or objects are here associated with God's confirmation of his promise by his oath.

I. That He might "more abundantly shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel."

On the manifestation of the Divine character and plans depend, both the promotion of God's glory, and the advancement of the safety, worth, and happiness of man. To his own children, accordingly, Jehovah delights to indicate and confirm "the immutability of his counsel." As that counsel is, in *their* case, the source and germ of glorious promises, and as it is in confirmation of those promises that the oath of which the sacred writer is here discoursing has been taken by the Majesty of heaven, believers are called "the heirs of promise." The phrase may either mean, *persons constituted heirs by promise*, or, *heirs of the promised good*. In both views, the essential signification is the same.

II. That they "might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before them."

God wills his children to be happy. Afflictions He is pleased, in mercy, to appoint them; but to their afflictions He offers an antidote in "consolation," "*strong* consolation"—comfort adequate to keep their souls in peace and nerve their hands for action, and fitted to suggest important lessons to the world. This consolation depends upon the faith of the promises; and in order, by confirming the faith, to enhance the consolation, Jehovah, it is here affirmed, has interposed

(ἐμπαύειν), in confirmation of his counsel and promise, with an oath.

And to whom is the confirmation given and the consolation offered? Very beautiful and expressive is the description of the persons meant. They "have fled for refuge"—*fled*, as Bengel appropriately suggests in connection with this text, *as if from shipwreck*. They were in danger, and that danger they have realized. A "refuge" rose before them; and, with earnest hearts, they have resorted thither. They needed, they sought, and they have found, deliverance from the curse of God and from the power of sin. To Christ they "fled;" in Christ they are; and in Christ they are destined to be "found" when He, their Saviour here, shall sit in judgment on their souls hereafter. In flying, too, they sought to "lay hold upon a hope." From the fact that the "hope" specified is represented as "set before them" (προκειμένη), it has been supposed that the object, not the principle, of hope is meant. It is obviously the principle, however, that is denoted by the corresponding relative "Which" in ver. 19. To understand, then, by "hope" in ver. 17, not the principle, but the object, would be awkward. Nor is this interpretation necessary. In betaking themselves to Christ, sinners seek to appropriate a sure and Scriptural hope of sweet and sublime experience on the earth, and of "glory, honour, and immortality," in heaven. And the principle of hope, as well as the glorious portion it anticipates, is "set before them." God offers, and even requires, it. The objects of that hope He clearly exhibits; and the principle itself He has constituted both a duty to be performed, and a privilege to be enjoyed, by his own adopted children.

19. *Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail ; 20. Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.*

Here true Christians are represented as really possessing the hope described. It is not only offered to them—it is actually theirs. In like manner, St. Peter writes:—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who . . . hath begotten us again unto a living hope," (1 Pet. i. 3). Blessed attainment! How the "good hope" elevates the believer's mind, and stirs his energies, and cheers and animates his heart!

It is here represented as "an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast." The image is beautiful and true. The world is a sea—tumultuous and troubled. The soul is a ship—exposed to the billows of the world, manned with its own faculties and feelings, and "rigged," not, in the case of the believer, "with curses dark," but with blessings manifold. And to that soul, still tarrying on the earth, hope is an "anchor"—it preserves it from being drifted away, and it keeps it calm, and peaceful, and composed. The representation of hope as an anchor is now rife and familiar in literature and art. In foreign burial-grounds, the anchor is often found surmounting the ashes of the dead.

Hope is here described as "entering into that within the vail." The anchor is cast, not into the muddy or weedy channel of the deep, but into heaven itself. This representation indicates the firmness of the hold which the anchor takes, and also exhibits the ship as near the hospitable shore. The anchored soul can look abroad,

already, over the bright and gorgeous scenery of heaven; and in a little while, it will be floating in the peaceful haven—nay, it will be itself one of the glorious objects of an inconceivably glorious world.

And a Friend and Champion of the saint is there before him. “The Forerunner has for him entered.” A good and glorious One has already gone to heaven—to point out the way, to prepare the place, and to make friendly overtures and efforts there. But who is *He*? and what is his name? His name is “Jesus;” and He bears it worthily. He came to earth that He might save—that He might save, He went to heaven. But what is there about Him that peculiarly meets the believing sinner’s case? He is “made an high-priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedec”—a description of Christ which is copiously explained and vindicated in chapt. vii. He made atonement once, He maketh intercession now. “Death has no more dominion over Him,” (Rom. vi. 9); and “this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood,” (chapt. vii. 24). O well may the believer be hopeful and happy, with such a Foundation on which to rest his soul—with such a “Forerunner” gone before him to their common Father’s house—with such a Friend and Advocate to represent him “within the vail!”

CHAPTER VII.

1. *For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; 2. To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all: first being, by interpretation, King of righteousness, and after that also, King of Salem, which is, King of peace: 3. Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but, made like unto the Son God, abideth a priest continually.*

We are taught in the New Testament, and nowhere more distinctly or decidedly than in this Epistle, that, in the times of the Old Testament, God took two methods of announcing the future advent, and of describing the person, character, and work of Christ. To the Hebrew nation He sent prophets who foretold that a great and good Deliverer for Jew and Gentile should appear—a Deliverer who should introduce a pure and practical religion, should exhibit a noble pattern of moral excellence, should suffer as a sacrifice for sin, should thereafter enter on a state of transcendent glory, and should establish a kingdom commensurate, at last, with the limits of the world, (Deut. xviii. 15; Psalm ii., xlv., cx.; Isa. ix. 6, 7, xi. 1-9, xlii. 1-4, liii.; Dan. ix. 24-27; Micah v. 2; Hagg. ii. 7-9; Zech. xiii. 7; Mal. iii. 1-4; &c.) These things the Divinely-commissioned and Divinely-qualified seers of the Jewish Church and Commonwealth foretold; and these things, at the same time, were, as if by diagrams, illustrated by a body of symbolic signs, more especially by the ritual ordinances of the Mosaic law, (Col. ii. 17;

Heb. viii. 5, ix. 9, x. 1). This twofold method of revealing the Messiah, as it was employed by Divine wisdom among the Jewish people from the time of the giving of the law, was also employed by Him antecedently to that event. From the very fall of man, He announced a Saviour by distinct predictions. Such was the First Promise:—"Thou shalt bruise his heel, and he shall bruise thy head," (Gen. iii. 15). Such was the oracular announcement of dying Jacob:—"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be," (Gen. xlix. 10). Such, finally, was that great prophecy involved in the Patriarchal Covenant:—"In thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed," (Gen. xxviii. 14). And what these promises foretold was, as it were, embodied and set forth in ceremonial rites, and also in historic characters. St. Paul declares, that "Adam is a figure of him that was to come," (Rom. v. 14). In the present passage, and onwards to ver. 17, Melchizedec is exhibited as representative of Christ. And, although the doctrine of typism has frequently been carried to an extravagant extent, and although it would be foolish and dangerous to consider every fact in the Pentateuch as a type, yet that, according to the analogy of these well-authenticated cases, such narratives as those of Noah and Joseph should be regarded by wise and sober-minded men as having an express symbolic reference to Christ, needs neither to be wondered at nor blamed.

To this whole doctrine of ancient types, however, the objection may be taken—How could "the grey fathers of the world" recognize, in human characters and cere-

monial services, representations of the promised Messiah? (1.) Aids and facilities for so understanding them, such as *we* have not the means of identifying or recognizing, may have been vouchsafed by Heaven to honest and earnest minds; and as to the prophets themselves, we are told that, when they “enquired and searched diligently” what were the import and reference of certain things, God enabled them to see that these were connected with Messiah and his times, (1 Peter i. 10-12). (2.) It may have been for *us* in the Christian age, rather than for those who lived in the earlier period of the world, that the typical system was instituted; and the study of that system by serious and candid minds is well fitted to afford them deeper and livelier views of Christ and his glorious character and work, and also to unfold to them the marvellous connection subsisting among all the moral Economies of God. If, however, in the case here presented, that of Melchizedec, it be thought that what the sacred writer says does not necessarily imply the existence of what theologians call a type; surely it must needs be granted that, in the first three, as also in some subsequent, verses of this chapter, he traces a very minute and remarkable parallelism, or analogy, between Melchizedec and Christ, and that it is a matter of duty to follow his illustration with interest and attention.

There are two things in his method of introducing the present subject which it is of great importance to observe. In beginning to speak about Melchizedec, he made, as it were, an awful pause—suggesting a fear that what he had to say respecting that distinguished ancient would fail to be distinctly understood by those whom he addressed. He attributes to them “dulness of hear-

ing," such as greatly disqualified them for getting the good of his discourse. Alas! alas! such "dulness of hearing" in religion is sadly common still; and the slight and superficial are often preferred, among ourselves, to the solid and substantial. But the sacred writer represents his doctrine respecting Melchizedec as intimately connected with that progress towards "perfection" to which he calls the Christian Hebrews. When the soul is ripening in religion, it is very usual for such subjects as that in question to be peculiarly dear and delightful. We should all be ripening; and an honest, earnest, and believing study of such illustrations as are given in this Epistle of the relation of certain Scripture-characters and sacred institutions to Christ and Christianity, is fitted to promote the intellectual and spiritual growth.

The subject of the present passage is Melchizedec. He comes before us in the 14th chapter of Genesis; and his interview with Abraham, referred to here, is there briefly, but explicitly, detailed. The style in which Moses presents him is abrupt; and equally so is that in which he removes him from our view. In this respect, there is a resemblance to the case of Elijah among the prophets. From what *is* said, and from what is *not* said, in Scripture, about Melchizedec, speculative minds have taken occasion to indulge in idle inquiries and vain conjectures. Some have even wildly dogmatized on matters not recorded. One class, for instance, have maintained that Melchizedec was Christ himself; another, that he was Shem. Absurd delusions both! In comparing Melchizedec with Christ, the sacred writer obviously signifies that the one was a distinct person from the other; and to suppose them identical

is to strike at the very root of his argument and illustration. As to the doctrine that Melchizedec was Shem—a doctrine held by many ancient Jews, who, probably, were unwilling to admit that the great Priest who blessed Abraham, and to whom the Patriarch gave tithes, was of the stock of Ham or Japheth—these three considerations should be sufficient to set it aside:—(1.) There is no warrant at all for it in Scripture; (2.) Moses, who writes respecting Shem as well as Melchizedec, not only does not identify them, but, on the contrary, by the distinction of names, indicates a distinction of persons; (3.) Whereas it is here said that Melchizedec was “without father, without mother, without descent”—that is, no doubt, that these are not recorded—Moses expressly specifies the paternity and ancestry of Shem. From these errors of speculative minds it is time to proceed to the statements of an authoritative pen.

I. Melchizedec was “King of Salem.”

Salem was certainly in Canaan—the land where Melchizedec and Abraham met. But how, in a land like that—a land on which a curse was denounced by dying Jacob, and whose inhabitants were destroyed by the express command of Heaven—did the former live and execute his office as “priest of the most high God?” (1.) It is not a matter of course that Canaan was already wholly given up to idolatry and crime; and therefore, Melchizedec may have been himself a Canaanite, and may also have found a body of worshippers of the true God among whom he could discharge his functions. (2.) Even if Canaan was more idolatrous than we have sufficient reason to believe that it now was, Melchizedec, who was, perhaps, of the Japhetian stock, may have

been raised up by Heaven as "a light in a dark place," and a harbinger and representative of the future ingathering of the Gentiles to Christ.

Two places of the name of Salem are mentioned in the Old Testament. The one is Salem in the land of Shechem (Gen. xxxiii. 18)—the same, perhaps, as is mentioned in the New Testament, under the name of Salim, in connection with the ministry of John the Baptist, (John iii. 23). The other is Jerusalem itself, which is called simply Salem in Psalm lxxvi. 1, 2:—"In Judah is God known; his name is great in Israel: in Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion." Jerome supposed the former to be the Salem of which Melchizedec was king, and he even says that, in his own time, the ruins of the palace of that ancient prince were visible in Salem of Shechem. Such traditions, however, were then, as they are now, very questionable and unsatisfactory; and Josephus, who lived four hundred years before Jerome, specifies no such ruins as are mentioned by the Christian Father. It would be foolish, on the other hand, dogmatically to affirm that what was ultimately called "Jerusalem" (Jeru-Salem, the Vision of Peace) is the Salem of the text. But assuredly (1.) The situation of the great metropolis of Palestine was one likely to be early fixed upon for a town in the colonization of the land; (2.) That point lay near to the route which Abraham may be supposed to have taken on his homeward way "from the slaughter of the kings;" and, (3.) If Jerusalem was the place of which Melchizedec was king, he was thus the more strikingly representative of Christ—of whom Jehovah says, "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion," (Psalm ii. 6).

It is certainly in respect chiefly of the priesthood that, in this passage and in the succeeding verses, Melchizedec is compared to Christ. But, considering the object and design of the present specification of particulars, it must be understood that the royalty of the former has a typical, or at least a figurative, application to the latter. Besides, the combination of royalty and priesthood in one person was—as compared, at least, with the Levitical Economy—a distinctive, peculiar, and characteristic thing. That combination was realized in Melchizedec. The same combination is realized in Christ. He is “a Priest upon his Throne,” (Zech. vi. 13). And, as if in reference to this double character of their Lord and Saviour, his believing followers, in a humbler, yet still transcendently lofty, sense, are “a royal priesthood,” (1 Pet. ii. 9), and may exclaim, “He hath made us kings and priests unto God,” (Rev. i. 6).

With Salem, both in the literal and figurative application of the name, Christ, as King, has especially to do. It was through Jerusalem that, “in the days of his flesh,” He rode in lowly, but royal stateliness,” (Zech. ix. 9; Matt. xxi. 1-11). To Israel and her great metropolis was Messiah promised as a Sovereign Prince, ere ever the Magi came to welcome the regal visitor; and as He was, in his birth, saluted as Israel’s King, (Matt. ii. 1-6), so, over his cross on the heights of Salem, the unchangeable inscription bore that He was “King of the Jews,” (John xix. 19-22). And there is another Zion on which his throne is set—another Salem in which He reigns—the Zion, the Salem, of the Church. Amidst hostile arms and quaking dynasties, “let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.”

“Rise, crowned with light, imperial Salem, rise!
Exalt thy towery head, and lift thine eyes!

* * * *

The seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay,
Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away;
But fix'd his word, his saving power remains:
Thy realm for ever lasts, thy own Messiah reigns.”*

II. Melchizedec was “priest of the most high God.”

The phrase, “of the most high God,” serves two ends. (1.) It contradistinguishes Melchizedec and his priesthood from priests of “the gods many and lords many” of Paganism, and from the functions, often gross and cruel, which these performed. (2.) It suggests the solemnity and importance of the sacerdotal work which Melchizedec performed, and the reverence and awe with which not only ministers, but private believers, should maintain intercourse with that glorious One into whose presence they are called to enter, and whose business they are called to do.

The priesthood of the King of Salem, in all probability, comprehended the two functions of Sacrifice and Intercession. The statement in Genesis that he “brought forth bread and wine” (Gen. xiv. 18), has been represented by Roman Catholics as a specimen and vindication of the mass. But even supposing that statement to denote a sacerdotal, and not a regal, act, how can what the Papists understand by the mass be found in it? What is their mass? They hold that, in the mass, bread and wine are converted into Christ, and that Christ, thus constituted—manufactured, if one may venture to say so—is offered up as a propitiatory sacrifice to God. Where, in the bread and wine brought forth by Melchizedec, is there an intimation of this, or

* Pope.

any warrant for the dogma or the service—a dogma self-contradictory and absurd—a service alike childish, monstrous, and unscriptural? But, in point of fact, it is not as a priest that Melchizedec seems to have brought forth bread and wine. The phrase “brought forth” does not denote the presentation of sacrifice; and it is not until Moses has recorded that Melchizedec “brought forth bread and wine” that he introduces him as “the priest of the most high God.” It was as a hospitable and generous king that he provided these articles of fare—intending them for the refreshment of Abraham and his troops.

Even so does Christ, our better Melchizedec, provide for his faithful soldiers. He “sendeth no one a warfare on his own charges;” when faint and weary, the soldier of the cross is nourished and sustained with “angels’ food;” and when the warfare is ended, and the victory is won, he is welcomed to a banquet of everlasting joy. And Christ, his Shepherd, is his High-priest too. For *him*, for mighty multitudes, He presented atoning sacrifice—that sacrifice himself. For *him*, for all who believe upon his name, He offers interceding prayers to his God and Father—“*his* Father and *their* Father, *his* God and *their* God.” And so, the chosen and believing people know the truth, and experience the fulfilment, of his words, “My flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed,” “I am the bread of life,” (John vi. 35, 55), and find Him to be indeed “a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec,” (Psalm cx. 4; Heb. vii. 11-17).

III. Melchizedec “met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him.”

It appears from Gen. xiv. 19, 20, that the blessing

pronounced by Melchizedec was twofold. He blessed God on Abraham's behalf, and he blessed Abraham in God's name. "Blessed," said he, "be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth ; and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand." The blessing on Abraham was obviously something more than a simple prayer, such as any pious friend might offer for another. It was an official and authoritative act, and, in this respect, resembles the blessings pronounced by ancient patriarchs on their children—the benediction which the Jewish priests were instructed to pronounce on the children of Israel : —"The Lord bless thee and keep thee : the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee : the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace," (Numb. vi. 24-26)—and that of the apostle Paul :—"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all," (2 Cor. xiii. 14).

Although it was when Abraham was "returning from the slaughter of the kings" that Melchizedec "blessed him," it would be extravagant to say that we have here an absolutely conclusive proof of the lawfulness of defensive war ; and assuredly, if war be a necessity, it is a very awful one. It is terrible even to read the record of what is called a glorious fight ; it is sweet to anticipate the time when, under the sceptre of "the Prince of peace," "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," (Isa. ii. 4) ; and it is well that efforts should be made to hasten on that bright expected age. But alas ! it seems as if, for the present, unless her liberties and her religion, her hearths and her altars, be too worthless or insignificant to pre-

serve, at such a cost, from being violated or overturned, Britain needs, while intent on peace, to be prepared for war. God himself has often sanctioned even bloody struggles in a patriotic cause. And certainly, the fact that it was when Abraham was "returning from the slaughter of the kings" that Melchizedec "blessed him," and the particular terms in which the benediction was delivered, look favourably towards the lawfulness, in certain cases, of defensive war.

To a spiritual warfare we have all been called; and while Christ is the Captain of the host, the better Abraham leading on his followers to battle and to victory, He, as the anointed Priest, the better Melchizedec, blesses his conquering, and even his struggling, troops. With his priestly hands extended, in generous benediction, over his first disciples, He left the world. In the same attitude, as it were, He still is standing, as He looks down from his heavenly throne on the earthly charge which He loves so well. The good which on their behalf He seeks, it is his own prerogative and office to bestow. Nor can it be withheld. What is wanted for the fight—wisdom, strength, courage, hope—He delights, when his soldier looks to Him in faith and earnestness, to give. At length comes victory. Nor is that promise obsolete:—"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne," (Rev. iii. 21).

IV. To Melchizedec "Abraham gave a tenth part of all" the spoils.

By the Mosaic law the payment of tithes to the priesthood was expressly required. This, however, does not imply that the system of tithes for ministers is obli-

gatory on *us* in these Christian times. Nor can such a conclusion be established even by the case of Jacob's vow and that of Abraham and Melchizedec. For, (1.) These are but examples, and individual ones; (2.) The tithes were paid in peculiar circumstances; (3.) Neither Abraham nor Jacob can be regarded as, in all things, an infallible example; (4.) Christian ministers are not, strictly speaking, priests. Whether it may not be expedient for a Christian State to provide for the maintenance and diffusion of religion by a legal tithe, is an open question; nor may it be denied that under such a system, if constitutionally established, the regular payment of the tithe is a matter of conscience and moral obligation. But that the system itself is an incumbent one there is no sufficient evidence in the word of God to prove.

The comparison, however, which is here carried on between Melchizedec and Christ implies, that the fact of Abraham paying tithes to the former has a counterpart in reference to the latter. The contribution of gold and treasures to the cause of the kingdom of Messiah, is one of the facts recorded respecting him in Hebrew prophecy, (Psalm lxxii. 10, 15). Since the day when the Magi cast their gold, and frankincense, and myrrh at his blessed feet, thousands and tens of thousands have laid a like tribute on his altar. Christ deserves, and Christianity needs, it all. He who, for sinners, "became poor, that they, through his poverty, might be rich," is surely entitled to a large proportion of our substance. That, independently of any money of ours, He could work successfully is, of course, in some sense true. But, in unswerving wisdom and condescending mercy, He chooses to work by means; and among the appointed

means is money. By ministers and missionaries, who are dependent on money for support—by Bibles and other practical and precious books, which must be printed and circulated at the cost of money—by places of worship, which it requires money to erect—and by other ordinances and institutions, which it is for money to establish and maintain—Christ upholds his cause, and extends his kingdom. Alas! how imperfectly does even his own blood-bought and ransomed Church realize his claims on her substance, and the urgency with which she is required to yield a large proportion of it for her Master's sake! And alas that where the obligation is distinctly seen, it should be so scantily fulfilled! In any age, but especially in an age like ours, opportunities of giving to the Lord are numerous and varied. One of these assumes a form very similar to the case of Abraham and Melchizedec—the becoming sustentation of the Christian ministry. “Let him that is taught in the word,” says St. Paul, “communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things,” (Gal. vi. 6). In many cases, the poverty of the minister is a reproach to the people. And for Christian men to take advantage of the fact that the system of tithes is not distinctly enforced in the New Testament to be stinted and mean in their pecuniary support of the ministers and ordinances of the Church, would be a fearful perversion and misapplication of the liberty and spirituality of the Economy of Christ.

V. Melchizedec was, “by interpretation, King of righteousness and King of peace.”

This statement of the passage refers to the import of the names *Melchizedec* and *Salem*. *Melchi* means, King; *Zedec*, righteousness; and *Salem*, peace. It is probable

that Melchizedec was a righteous and pacific king. At any rate, the name he bore, and that of the city where he dwelt, involved the ideas of righteousness and peace. And it is here distinctly intimated that, in this respect, he was fitted to represent the character and government of Christ.

Christ, in very deed, is "King of righteousness." Under this character He was foretold in Prophecy. "He shall judge thy people with righteousness," says the Psalmist, "and thy poor with judgment," (Psalm lxxii. 2). In another Psalm the "Fairer than the children of men" is thus addressed:—"The sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre," "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness," (Psalm xlv. 6, 7). Of the "Rod from Jesse's stem" Isaiah writes:—"Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins," (Isa. xi. 5). Thus, too, by Jeremiah, Jehovah speaks:—"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch; and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute justice and judgment in the earth," (Jer. xxiii. 5). Beautifully descriptive are these quotations, of the character and sceptre of our Mediatorial King! His soul, how pure! His life, how undefiled! His laws, how just! His administration, how upright! The issues and outgoings of his sufferings and his glory, of his humiliation on the earth and his triumph in the heavens, how suffused and fraught with righteousness!

Nor is he less truly "King of peace." In this character, too, was he held up in Prophecy to the eye of faith. "Abundance of peace" was to signalize his reign, (Psalm lxxii. 7). His name was to be called, "The Prince of peace," (Isa. ix. 6). And so, when angels sang his

birthday song, one of its sweetest notes was this—“Peace on earth,” (Luke ii. 14). His personal ministry was neither the earthquake nor the thunder, but the “still, small voice.” Peace He bequeathed to his disciples as a legacy of love, (John xiv. 27). He “made peace through the blood of his cross,” (Col. i. 20). His Gospel breathes of peace. They who believe it enter into peace. Theirs is peace with God; theirs, too, is peace with man; and a “peace which passeth understanding” keeps their “hearts and minds by Christ Jesus.” Under the sceptre of Messiah, the wars which so long have wrought desolations in the earth shall pass away. Men “shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks,” (Isa. ii. 4). “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,” (Isa. xi. 6). “This Man shall be the peace,” even as He has already been. “Peace on earth” was proclaimed in the jubilee of his birth—“peace on earth” shall be fulfilled in the jubilee of his reign.

VI. Melchizedec was “without father, without mother, without descent, and, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually.”

That Melchizedec had a father and a mother, that he was descended from a race of ancestors, that he was born, and that he died, may be considered as absolutely certain facts. What, then, is meant by the present statement? In Greek, Latin, and Arabic literature, a person whose father or mother was inconsiderable or unknown was said to have no father or no mother, (Hor. *Serm.* i. 6, 10; Liv. iv. 3; Cic. *De Orat.* ii. 64; &c.) In the present case, the word rendered,

“without descent,” (*ἀγενεαλόγητος*) indicates the meaning of, “without father, without mother.” By the series of particulars it is manifestly meant to intimate, that the parents, the ancestry, the birth, and the death, of this royal priest are all unrecorded in the sacred narrative—that, in this respect, there is a remarkable difference between *him* and the priests of the house of Levi—and that, in so far as the record is concerned, he comes before us as a priest of unlimited existence, who had no predecessor and no successor in the sacred line. He was thus, it is still further intended to suggest, a meet representative of that “great high-priest” who, as God, had no mother—as man, had no human father—as Divine, never began to be, and never died—as Mediator, carries on his priesthood still, interceding for believers in the heavens, even as, on earth, He made atonement for their sins, and wrought out redemption for their souls.

4. *Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.* 5. *And verily they that are of the sons of Levi who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham :* 6. *But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.* 7. *And, without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better.* 8. *And here men that die receive tithes ; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.* 9. *And, as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.* 10. *For he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchisedec met him.*

In this Epistle, the sacred writer frequently calls on

those whom he addresses to consider what he says. Such is the moral lethargy that has settled on the human soul, and that still, in some measure, lingers in the minds of the faithful, that there is great danger of religious subjects, and especially certain of them, being neglected and overlooked. To such subjects, however—relating to the most important and interesting objects with which man can possibly have to do—and assuredly, not least to certain of such subjects about which men are peculiarly apt to feel indifferent—it is of vast consequence that they should seriously attend. Consideration in religion, therefore—comprehending earnest and intelligent regard to the meaning and import of what the sacred instructor says, and subsequent meditation on the doctrine he propounds or the duty he prescribes—is a great and urgent exercise.

The point which the Christian Hebrews are here called on to consider is the greatness of Melchizedec. And there are various relations in which human greatness is a fit object of consideration.

It is to be considered in relation to the providence of God.

All real greatness—intellectual, moral, and circumstantial—is intimately associated with the sovereignty of Heaven. In certain recorded instances, the connection of God with the attainment of such greatness is very distinctly indicated. It *is* so in the instances of Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Saul, David, and many other Scripture-characters. In these, the direct interference of the Divine Being is, at certain points, definitely marked; and the thoughtful reader of the narrative is thus prepared to acknowledge his hand throughout the whole tissue of the events that lead the individual on

to greatness. But the Scriptural doctrine of God's universal providence involves the fact that, even in more ordinary cases, his superintending care, and administrative wisdom, are employed. "Thine, O Lord," exclaims David, "is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine: thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all," (1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12). Now, it is reasonable, and right, and fitted to be practically useful, to trace the Divine sovereignty and the Divine wisdom in the production of personal and national greatness, and, when such greatness flashes on the eye, to see and feel that the hand of Jehovah has been there.

Farther, Human greatness is to be considered in relation to the ravages of death and time.

"All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass," (1 Pet. i. 24). "Riches take to themselves wings and fly away," (Prov. xxiii. 5). Power waxes weak as infancy. Even Fame's green garland is wont to wither on the brow. "There is no man that hath power over the spirit, to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war," (Ecc. viii. 8). How important, by the consideration of earthly greatness as, like other earthly objects, frail and fleeting, to be disabused of vain ambition, and to learn the lesson:—"Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" (Isa. ii. 22).

Again, Human greatness is to be considered in

relation to the example and encouragement which, in certain cases, it is fitted to afford.

Some men have been greatly good. Their moral aims have been lofty, their moral enterprises vast, and their moral attainments bright. Such instances it is well worth while to consider. True, there is, in the history of men, but one immaculate and perfect specimen of human virtue, and towards that chiefly we are called to look up with reverential regard. But in connection with that, and in subordination to that, other fine examples are to be intently marked and diligently followed. In this very Epistle, men are commanded to be "followers"—imitators—"of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises," (chapt. vi. 12). In order to be imitated, they must be considered. And independently of their importance as models, the consideration of them is fitted to inspire the soul with a moral enthusiasm both honourable and useful.

Finally, Human greatness is to be considered in relation to the typical character which certain great ones of the world possessed.

If God has assigned such a character to some of the principal personages of the Bible, and given us the means of tracing it, surely it would be unreasonable and sinful to refuse or neglect to do so. By the consideration of those elements of greatness wherein patriarchs, princes, priests, and prophets represented Christ, distinct and vivid views may be obtained of Christ himself. Thus, too, may be clearly apprehended the intimate relation subsisting among the various moral Economies of God, and the anticipative and Messianic character of God's providence from the very birth of time. The greatness of Melchizedec was typical; and

it is in reference to that character that the Christian Hebrews are here summoned to consider it.

Now, in order to exemplify and illustrate that greatness, a variety of facts are here propounded.

I. There is a description of Abraham :—"even the patriarch Abraham ;" "him that had the promises."

If God raises up on earth an eminently great and good man, it is not for us to disparage and despise him ; and if such a one has been an ancestor of our own, dearer to our hearts should his memory be than if, instead of leaving us the fragrance of his virtues, he had transmitted to our hands accumulated wealth or an imperial sceptre. Accordingly, the sacred writer honours Abraham. True, he had two errors in the popular Jewish estimate of that patriarch to correct. He would not have the Hebrews so to take advantage of Abraham's greatness as to regard their hereditary relation to him as a security for their own salvation. Neither would he have them to suppose that in no respect had the patriarch's greatness ever been excelled. Nevertheless, he heartily acknowledges that Abraham was a man truly great and Divinely honoured. By calling him "patriarch," he refers to him as not only the father of a distinguished family, and the chieftain of a powerful clan, but also the founder of a mighty nation ; and by the expression "him that had the promises," he indicates the fact that Jehovah, in token of his friendship for Abraham, as a recompence for his distinguished faith, and in order to constitute him a depository of saving truth for his posterity and for the world, promised to that ancient patriarch that he should be guided, defended, and consoled, amidst the difficulties, dangers, and trials, of his pilgrimage—that he should be "the father of a

mighty multitude"—that his posterity should possess the land in which he himself was a sojourner—that from his loins Messiah should arise—and that “in him should all families of the earth be blessed.”

II. It is here suggested, that, although Abraham was so highly distinguished, yet he “gave to Melchizedec the tenth of the spoils,” and received the blessing of that Canaanitish priest.

For the sake of illustration, there is a reference in the passage to the law of the Levitical Economy respecting tithes, and an intimation that, not only were the people required to pay them, but the priests were required to take them. In Melchizedec's case, however, it was not the people—it was Abraham, their illustrious ancestor and the special friend of God—who paid them. And as he paid tithes to Melchizedec—as an expression, and a meet one, of deference to his priestly character—so “Melchizedec blessed him”—pronouncing over him that sacerdotal benediction to which the principle applies, “The less is blessed of the better,” that is, of the superior.

III. It is here declared, that it was to one “of whom it is witnessed that he liveth” that Abraham paid tithes.

On this point, too, the sacred writer refers to the Jewish law. Its priests, he says, were manifestly and avowedly mortal. Their demise is sometimes expressly recorded; and it was regularly provided for by the terms and constitution of the law. But Melchizedec is never recorded to have died—he comes before the reader of the Mosaic history as if he were a permanent and perpetual priest. He *did* die—but it seems as if he had lived ever on.

IV. It is hinted, that Levi, as it were, "paid tithes in Abraham," "in whose loins he was" when Melchizedec and the patriarch met.

This representation has been supposed to depend on a federal relation as subsisting between Abraham and Levi. That, however, is a somewhat arbitrary and unnatural idea. The expression, "as I may so say," seems to indicate that the sacred writer is not insisting on the combination of Abraham and Levi by the circumstance that the one was the descendant of the other, as what could be literally and logically proved. In point of fact, the Levitical priesthood *did* cast itself, so to speak, at the feet of the Melchizedecan, as held by Christ; and here that tribute by the one priesthood to the other is represented as, in some sort, exhibited by Abraham, Levi's ancestor, paying tithes to Melchizedec.

11. *If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?* 12. *For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.*

That the Levitical priesthood, which was God's own ordinance, had an important purpose to serve, and actually, in a great measure, served it, is quite certain. Nevertheless, by that priesthood "perfection was not"—the Church was not thereby fully invested with the high privileges, and sweet experiences, which God designed for her. The Levitical priesthood could not, of itself, make expiation for human sin. Of the great atonement to be afterwards achieved, it was but an emblem somewhat faint and obscure. It failed to minister to the

mind a thoroughly accurate and distinct apprehension of "the Lamb of God." Unfaltering confidence and assurance in reference to God and eternity it did not, by any means, provide. And as peace, so sanctification too, was by means of it but imperfectly secured.

That "perfection was not by the Levitical priesthood" is here inferred from the fact that there was to "arise another priest," not "after the order of Aaron," but "after the order of Melchizedec." Why, it is argued, should God have arranged and provided for a priest and a priesthood contravening, in respect, not only of genealogy, but of essential character and constitution, the arrangements and provisions of the Mosaic law respecting the priesthood and those who were to discharge its functions, if the sacerdotal system which that law established and prescribed were quite sufficient? Something else, it is maintained, was needed, and is shown to have been needed by the provision made for it by God.

It is added, that a change in the priesthood requires and implies a change in the law. And that it does so is manifest. If the law expressly institute a certain priesthood, and also prescribe certain ordinances and services peculiar to that priesthood; God, in altering or abolishing the priesthood, and the corresponding ordinances and services, must needs alter or abolish the law respecting them. *We*, then, stand in a very different relation to the ceremonial law from that in which the Jews, before the advent of Messiah, stood to it. As the product of Divine wisdom, as essentially entering into the ancient Hebrew Constitution, and as typical and representative of Christ and Christianity, that law is still an important subject of investigation; but, in respect of its binding obligation, both Gentiles and Jews are free.

13. *For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.* 14. *For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.* 15. *And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,* 16. *Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.* 17. *For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.*

In these verses, the sacred writer still further develops the argument of ver. 11, 12. The force of his plea depends on the difference between the tribe and order of the Levitical priests and the tribe and order of Messiah. The former were to be of the tribe of Levi; but, prophetically, by the prediction of dying Jacob—and historically, by the actual genealogy of Christ—*He*, our New Testament Priest, is distinctly shown to be of the tribe of Judah. Now, this of itself, considering how strictly the ancient priesthood was limited to Levi's stock, indicates a mighty change upon the priesthood. But "far more evident," as is here suggested, does the thing become when it is found that Christ, besides being of a different "tribe," is of a different "order" of priesthood, from those who were constituted according to the Jewish law—when it is found that, as *He* is not of the tribe of Levi but of the tribe of Judah, so *He* is not of "the order of Aaron," but of "the order of Melchizedec."

One leading element in the difference—one principal feature of distinction—is denoted by the words:—"Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life."

I. Messiah "was made," or constituted, a priest.

In this point of view, He resembles the high-priests of the law themselves; in reference to whom it is elsewhere said:—"No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as Aaron was," (Heb. v. 4). All the three Persons of the Trinity conspired in consecrating Christ to the office and functions of a priest. The Father, in fulfilment of his eternal plan, sent Him into the world, and "anointed him with the Holy Ghost" above measure, (John iii. 34, x. 36; Acts iv. 27). He himself declares:—"Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not—but a body hast thou prepared me;" "Then said I, Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will, O God." "By the which will," adds the sacred writer, when he quotes the words, "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all," (Heb. x. 5-10). And Jesus on the eve of his last sufferings, said, "For their sakes I sanctify"—that is, consecrate—"myself," (John xvii. 19). Finally, it was by "the power of the Holy Ghost" that Christ was born, and by the unction of that same Spirit was He set apart to his sacerdotal work, (Isa. xi. 2, 3; Luke i. 35, iii. 22; John iii. 34.)

II. He "was not made" a priest "after the law of a carnal commandment."

Thus does the sacred writer describe that ceremonial system according to which the Levitical priests were made. That system had intimately to do with flesh, in the literal sense of the word—with the flesh which was to be circumcised, with the flesh which was to be offered up in sacrifice, with the flesh which was to be purified with water, and with the flesh which was to be anointed with oil and arrayed in gorgeous robes. But pro-

bably "carnal" is here, as so often elsewhere, the antithesis to "spiritual." In this view, it denotes the visible, worldly, and inadequate character of the law to which it is applied. So also, chapt. ix. 9, 10, that law is described as conversant with inadequate sacrifices, and with "meats and drinks, and diverse washings, and carnal ordinances." Now, it was, as is here declared, neither according to this law, nor according to any such law, that Christ was set apart to the priesthood. As it was not to offer the flesh of heifers, and goats, and lambs; so it was not by the unction of sacred oil, nor by investiture with costly robes, nor by any or all of the other formalities of the ceremonial law, that He was made a priest.

III. He was constituted such "after the power of an endless life."

"Everlasting life" is provided for believers by the sacerdotal work—by the atoning sacrifice and the intercessory prayers—of Christ. But it is obviously not what Christians obtain in virtue of his priesthood, but what, as possessed by himself, qualifies him for the priesthood, that is denoted by the phrase "an endless life." This appears from the statement that it was "after the power" of such a life that Christ was made a priest, and also from the supplementary quotation from the 110th Psalm, "Thou art a priest for ever." No doubt, the corporeal life of Jesus was extinguished when he "bowed his head and gave up the ghost." But in his Divine Nature he never died—his Mediatorial life continued even when his body rested in the grave—and since his resurrection, even his human nature is immutably alive. He can say, "I am the First and the Last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold! I am alive for evermore," (Rev. i. 17, 18).

“Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more ; death hath no more dominion over him,” (Rom. vi. 9). And the continuity and perpetuity of his human, his Divine, and his mediatorial vitality, render him One fit to be chosen and constituted priest. As, by reason of these, man may rest in Him with the firmer confidence ; so God had respect to them in choosing and setting Him apart. Considering how clearly the surrounding context suggests the interpretation now given of the expression, “the power of an endless life,” it is strange that Stuart should understand by it, “an authority of endless duration.”

As expressly specifying the perpetuity of Christ's priesthood, and also as verifying the other particulars in which the sacred writer has just been representing him, those words of the 110th Psalm are again cited : —“Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedec.” The quotation is introduced with the words, “He testifieth.” It constitutes the testimony of a true and faithful Witness—of One who “knoweth the Son,” and will not deceive his creatures respecting Him—of Jehovah, Lord of all. He bore such testimony to Christ by the ancient Psalmist, that the Hebrew Church might accurately and vividly realize that glorious Deliverer towards whom their hopes were turned. That testimony was preserved in “the volume of the Book,” that men of later ages might receive the instruction, guidance, and encouragement which it is fitted to afford.

18. *For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.* 19. *For the law made nothing perfect, but the*

bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

The "commandment" of ver. 18, and the "law" of ver. 19, are obviously one and the same thing, namely, the ceremonial law of Moses, or, more generally, the legal system of the Jews. This did not, indeed, "go before" the promise—of which St. Paul says, in the Epistle to the Galatians, that it existed four hundred and thirty years before the law was given, (Gal. iii. 17). But, while the promise of a Saviour, and consequently the means of appropriating Christ by faith, were possessed by men from the days of Abraham, and even, to some extent, from the fall of Adam, it was not till "the fulness of the time was come"—not till the advent of Messiah—that the Gospel in its plenitude of light and grace was introduced. The "law"—the "commandment"—"went before," the Christian Dispensation. It was preliminary, and led the way.

Of that "law," or "commandment," it is here affirmed, "there is verily a disannulling." This text—a large portion of the Epistle to the Hebrews—similar passages in the Epistles to the Galatians and Colossians—the vision of the sheet and the decision in the Council of Jerusalem, as recorded in the Acts—and the dreadful consummating act by which Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed, and the Jews themselves were scattered to the winds—combine to show that the ceremonial law of Moses, and the peculiar system under which they lived, have lost their validity and force—are "verily disannulled."

This result is here attributed to "the weakness and unprofitableness of the law;" of which it is said, that it "made nothing perfect." That law was Divine, and,

therefore, wisely adapted to the circumstances in which it was given. It aimed at an important end, and served an important purpose. It even prepared the way for the Economy of Christ. But still, of itself, it could neither propitiate for sin, nor minister solid and healthful satisfaction to the soul. Christ, indeed, fulfilled it; but, by fulfilling it, He neutralized it, and, if it was inadequate before the great Antitype appeared, how "weak and unprofitable" would be its services and ceremonies now! It "made nothing perfect" while it lasted; and for Christians to bind themselves to that heavy yoke would be to mingle "beggarly elements" with the spiritual religion of Jesus Christ (Gal. iv. 9), and to entail injury, instead of "profit," on themselves.

How, then, is perfection to be sought and found by the Church and by the individual soul? "The bringing in of a better hope," it is here affirmed, makes things perfect—for to suppose, with Erasmus, Zwingle, and Ebrard, that the law is here represented as "the bringing in of a better hope" is what the omission of a word for "was," and the very form of the phrase, forbid.

"Hope" generally means, a certain sentiment or principle, combining expectation and desire of something considered as good and also as future. That cannot be the sense of the word as here employed. It is obviously a system—the Economy of Christ—which the sacred writer is here contrasting with the law. Indeed, the comparative epithet "better" virtually represents the law as itself a "hope;" which it certainly cannot be in the sense of a mental sentiment or feeling. "Hope" sometimes denotes the thing hoped for. Now,

the Christian Economy was pre-eminently an object of hope to Old Testament believers, and Christ was even, in some sense, "the Desire of all nations," (Hagg. ii. 7). But still, it cannot be in this second signification of the word that Christianity is called a "hope;" for the epithet "better" represents the law itself as also a hope. The word, then, here denotes a ground, or cause, of hope; as where "the Lord Jesus Christ" is called "our hope," (1 Tim. i. 1). In this respect, Christ and Christianity are "better" than the law. The temporal character of the promises of the law made the hope which they inspired exceedingly imperfect. And when men looked for salvation by the law, their hope was false and fatal. How different is it with Christ and the system which He has ushered in! How pre-eminently glorious the promises which these propound! how absolutely sure and solid the foundation which these supply!

"By which" hope, it is added, "we draw nigh unto God."

There are two forms in which men need to "draw nigh," and in which believers *do* "draw nigh," "unto God." By nature and wicked works, men are "far from God." They are banished rebels—they are prodigal children who have wandered to a foreign land. In conversion, and by faith, the banished is restored—the wanderer comes home. This is one way of "drawing nigh unto God." But another is specified, chapt. x. 22:—"Let us draw near with a true heart," &c. That passage obviously relates to devotional intercourse with God. All spiritual worship, indeed, is a drawing nigh of the soul to the Father-Spirit of the universe. Much that is called worship, it is true, by no means realizes this

description. A man may regularly enter the house of prayer—a man may, with apparent reverence, fall upon his knees—and yet never “draw nigh to God.” But every pious soul, by prayer, and thanksgiving, and meditation, engages in this sublime and sacred exercise. And how? “By the better hope.” As by Christ and Christianity the sinner returns to God, so by Christ and Christianity the believer holds sweet and profitable fellowship with Heaven. A privilege—O how precious! A duty—O how urgent! Very thankful should we be for the Economy by which it may be realized; and very earnestly should we use that system for the fulfilment of the high design.

20. *And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: 21. (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord swear, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec :) 22. By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.*

What is here meant by Christ being constituted a priest with an oath—the oath of his Eternal Father—is explained by the quotation from the 110th Psalm. This Divine oath both indicates the importance of Messiah’s priesthood, and is fitted to assure the soul of the reality of that priesthood. The fact that such an oath was interposed in the case of Christ, and not in the case of the Levitical priests, is represented as expressive of the superiority of the Christian to the Levitical Economy. In both cases, there was what is here translated “a testament”—there was a *διαθήκη*—a covenant, or, more generally, a constitution or system of things. Both had sureties; the one had the Jewish

high-priest—the other, “Jesus.” But, in respect of dignity and excellence, there was a vast difference between the two Economies. The latter was “better” than the former—clearer in its light, more spiritual in its character, and more efficacious in its influence. Of this nobler and better constitution—a constitution in which two parties, God and man, are intimately and essentially concerned—a constitution which is, in a certain sense, a covenant—“Jesus is the Surety.” That blessed Mediator is a Surety for God to man, and a Surety for man to God. By his doctrine, and sacrifice, and reign, He assures the believer of Jehovah’s immutable and immortal friendship; by his death and intercession, He represents the believer to the Father as one for whom a price is paid, and to whom grace to live a life of new obedience shall be given. Glorious suretyship! Who would not seek to have a personal interest in the security which it affords, and in the salvation which it certifies!

23. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: 24. But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

As, in comparing Melchizedec and Christ, the sacred writer insists on the fact that, as the former, in so far as the Mosaic record is concerned, “had neither beginning of days nor end of life,” the latter “abideth a priest continually;” so here, in contrasting Christ with the Levitical priests, he specifies the fact that, whereas the latter died, and, in dying, laid down their office, the former “continueth ever,” and “has” thus “an unchangeable priesthood.”

The statement, "they truly were many priests," denotes, not so much the circumstance that, under the Jewish Law, several persons executed the functions of the priesthood at one and the same time, but rather, the fact that the priests multiplied by the ravages of death in their successive generations. It is specifically as a high-priest that Christ is generally represented in that large portion of the Epistle to which these verses belong. The Jewish high-priests, therefore, may be regarded as here specifically meant. Now, there was but one high-priest at a time, and the multiplication of these was occasioned by the death of each. That there were many of these functionaries, then, is a humiliating and monitory fact. And yet, it indicates the care which Jehovah took of Israel in providing for them a succession of men to discharge the sacerdotal work, and has a glorious parallel in the providential mercy whereby He still fills up such blanks as death is perpetually making in the Church, and upholds the ordinances on which her edification so much depends.

The multiplication of priests is here expressly traced to the fact, that "they were not suffered to continue by reason of death." Some of them died in the mid-time of their days; others discharged their work until the season of hoary hairs. Some, probably, were unwilling to depart, while others meekly bowed down their heads and died. But, amidst all the varieties of age and feeling, the ravages of death went on, and no law relating to the priesthood was more peremptory or sure than that which consigned them, in their successive generations, to the tomb. "They were not suffered to continue by reason of death;" and when death came to them, their sacerdotal life expired.

Thus it still fares with men, with ministers, with all. A simple lesson, but often poorly learned! That ultimately we shall "not be suffered to continue by reason of death" is oftentimes forgotten—sometimes, apparently, almost disbelieved. And even, alas! when the fact is remembered and acknowledged, how frequent is it to overlook what death involves—the separation of body and soul; the source from which it emanates—sin; and the issues to which it leads—Eternity, Judgment, Heaven, Hell! In the very circumstance that death removes us from this terrestrial scene of things, and brings the professional pursuits of life to a termination, there is what should arrest and solemnize the mind. What a serious consideration this for worldly-minded and wicked men! What a pensive one even for the saints! "I must part with my library," writes Richard Baxter in prospect of his death, "and shall turn over the pages of my pleasant books no more." With death before them, well may men be cautious as to what temporal pursuits they choose. With death before them, how reasonable that ministers, and private Christians, should diligently ply the work of their sacred calling! A joyful thing it is to know that the faithful, in bidding the professional business of life farewell, shall pass to a nobler sphere of being, and a more illustrious kind of work. And amidst the funerals of the great and good, what a ground of hope and confidence is He—far greater and better than the best and greatest of them all—the high-priest who "continueth ever, and hath an unchangeable priesthood!"

Viewed by itself, this description of Christ might be applied exclusively to his post-resurrection state. But in this limited view, it would form but an unsatisfac-

tory contrast to that previously given of the priests who died, and, in dying, parted with their priesthood. Besides, it is said in the previous context, that Christ "*was made*" a priest "after," or according to, "the power of an endless life." Here, then, it is to be understood, that, although Christ died in his human nature, as did the priests of Levi's line, He, as God and Mediator, survived the stroke of death, and thus never laid down his priesthood after He had once assumed it. But is He never to lay it down? Some suppose that when all the chosen are gathered into glory, He will resign his priestly character. "Ever" and "unchangeable" favour a different view. At any rate, Scripture does not teach that Christ will ever cease to plead the virtue of his blood on behalf of his ransomed and regenerate people; and, so long as He does that, He "executeth the office of a priest."

25. *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

Men, by nature and wicked works, are far from God. In conversion, they come to Him, and come to Him *by Christ*—being not only saved for *his* sake, but actually applying Him to their souls by faith—walking in that sure and consecrated path of which Christ himself declares:—"I am the way no man cometh unto the Father but by me," (John xiv. 6). Again, when believers engage in spiritual worship, they "draw near" to God—they "lift up their hearts unto God in the heavens"—they, in respect of their realizing views of Him whom they worship, and of the mutual fellowship carried on between themselves and that celestial

Majesty, "come unto God." Now, in both ways, those whom the "great high-priest" effectually saves realize the import of the expression, "come unto God by Him." Indeed, all who, in the former way, "come unto God by Christ," do so also in the latter, and all who do so in the latter have already done so in the former. He who comes to God by conversion through Christ the way, comes to God by devotion through the same glorious medium; and he who holds fellowship with God in prayer, and meditation, and other spiritual acts and exercises, by Jesus Christ, has assuredly, through Him, come back to his Father's house, and been introduced to the immunities of his Father's kingdom.

This class of persons Christ "is able to save to the uttermost." It seems as if, in some sense, He were unable to save such as refuse or neglect to "come unto God by Him." True, as God He is omnipotent; but, in respect of the principles of God's moral government, and in respect of the laws and arrangements of his own mediatorial Economy, it is incompetent, and therefore morally impossible, for such to be saved by Christ. But far otherwise with those who "come unto God by Christ" the way. In many a text, that Elder-Brother, and tender-hearted Lover, of their souls is represented as willing to save them; and here He is said to be able so to do—yea, to "save them to the uttermost." This "uttermost" respects both their complete nature and their endless being. The Christian salvation takes effect upon all the parts of the human constitution. The understanding, the heart, the conscience, nay, the body itself, comes within its reach. Even in the present world, every part of the man, to some extent, is saved; and in heaven, although the amount of glory

will probably increase with the advancing powers and susceptibilities of the sons of immortality, yet, up to the measure of the man, his "joy will be full," and his salvation will be complete. Christ's redemption, too, is "an eternal redemption." The spiritual life of the ransomed and renovated sinner can never be extinguished. The salvation which meets all the moral necessities of the soul is immortal like the soul itself. As "death has no more dominion over Christ," so the deliverance He bestows will never die.

In this noble style, and to this glorious extent, Christ, it is here announced, "is able to save" believers. To *Him* pertain all the attributes which can give a personal competency for this majestic work. He, too, in respect of the past, the present, and the future, discharge of his mediatorial offices, is "able" to achieve it. One of those offices, and one specific function of it, are here more particularly mentioned in this relation:—"He ever liveth to make intercession"—more strictly, *to interpose, to act as a representative and defender*, (*ἑντυγχάνειν*)—"for them" "that come unto God by him."

Even on earth, Christ was an Intercessor. He prayed for Peter, that his "faith might not fail," (Luke xxii. 32). And what a rich and fervent specimen of intercessory prayer is that which occupies the 14th and two following chapters of the Gospel of St. John! That Christ maintains the believer's cause in heaven is more than once affirmed in this Epistle; and the same interesting and animating fact is, in other portions of Scripture, as plainly and explicitly declared. "It is Christ that died," says St. Paul, "yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession"—interposeth (*ἑντυγχάνει*)—"for

us," (Rom. viii. 34). "If any man sin," says St. John, "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," (1 John ii. 1). How Christ's intercession is carried on, we, probably, for the present, cannot thoroughly understand. He personally appears in the presence of the Father in the character of a Mediator. The "Lamb slain" is an object continually present to Jehovah's eye—as if bearing still the traces of his sacrificial death. But the declaration, "I will pray the Father," (John xiv. 16), is fitted to suggest that, if not in actual words, yet by some distinct expression of his wishes for the welfare of the chosen, the exalted high-priest pleads their cause. "Him the Father heareth always," (John xi. 42)—this, the dignity of his person, the merit of his sacrifice, and the earnestness and reasonableness of his advocacy, secure. And that glorious life in the possession and exercise of which He is here said to discharge one of the functions of his priesthood, stands in a like relation to his Prophetic and Kingly offices. All this is a blessed security for the salvation of believers; and so, the words are realized:—"He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing he ever liveth to interpose for them." How desirable to have an interest in the deathless life, and perpetual advocacy, of this "great high-priest!" How sweet and refreshing for the believer to know that Jesus pleads his cause in heaven! And O how important, and how necessary, to "come unto God by Him!"

26. *For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; 27. Who needeth not daily, as those*

high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. 28. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

The same word "became" which occupies so important a place in this passage, also occurs in chapt. ii. 10. If it be asked, what kind of Saviour, and what kind of salvation, "became," or were suitable to, *God*, there is an answer in the one text. If it be asked, what kind of Saviour, and what kind of salvation, "became," or were suitable to, *us*, there is an answer in the other.

Here the sacred writer, representing Christ as holding a certain office—that of "a high-priest"—attributes to Him certain corresponding qualifications, and intimates that, in respect of these, He, the high-priest, "became us."

I. To Christ, as a high-priest, are attributed certain corresponding qualifications.

When various collateral particulars relative to one and the same subject are dispersed over an extended passage in a succession such as the freedom of epistolary discourse is fitted to suggest, it may sometimes serve a useful purpose to arrange them in a more systematic order. This may be conveniently and appropriately done in the present case.

1. A certain character is here attributed to Christ, our high-priest:—"holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."

"Holy"—here represented by ἅγιος—is a word habitually employed in the Hebrew Constitution. As thus used, it represents the object to which it is applied as

consecrated to God, or devoted to a sacred use. It is also a frequent word in the New Testament; and there, in accordance with the spiritual character of Christianity, it denotes the real separation of man from sinful and earthly pursuits and aims to the service of Almighty God. In this sense, believers are "holy;" and in this sense, the epithet is here applied to Christ.

"Harmless" (*ἀκακος*) has a special relation to a man's connection with his fellow-creatures. It denotes freedom from such a state of mind, and from such a style of conduct, as tends or designs to injure others. As here applied to Christ, it intimates that there was no injustice in his dealings, no treachery in his friendships, no falsehood in his lips, no violence in his hand, and no malignity in his heart.

"Undefiled" (*ἀμίαντος*) suggests a relation to defiling influences, but represents the person to whom it is applied as meeting them unscathed. The virgin-mother, though represented, among Romanists, by the phrase 'The immaculate conception,' as naturally sinless, was a sinful woman after all; and yet Jesus, the Virgin-born, was "undefiled." The world sought, sometimes by its blandishments, sometimes by its frowns, and habitually by its false principles and impure examples, to draw Him into sin; but He continued "undefiled." The Devil sought, by wily arts and furious onsets, to taint his spirit and pervert his conduct; but He came forth from the struggle "undefiled."

There are certain senses in which Jesus was not "separate from sinners."—He was not separate from them in respect of *nature*. It was a true, though immaculate, humanity which He assumed, and in which He tabernacled in the midst of men.—He was not

“separate from sinners” in respect of *residence*. He lived on earth; and earth groaned beneath the sins of its inhabitants. He laboured in Galilee; and Galilee was proverbially bad. He preached, and suffered, and died, in Jerusalem; and the voice of Jerusalem’s crimes “entered into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth.”—He was not “separate from sinners” in respect of *society*. As one who came, “not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance,” He held intercourse with wicked men. The Physician was found beside the sick-bed. The Deliverer of guilty and ruined souls “ate and drank with publicans and sinners.”—He was not “separate from sinners” in respect of his personal experience at the hands of men, or even at the hands of God. He shared in the ordinary trials incident to sinful man. He was treated as if He had been pre-eminently sinful. He was the object of harsh reproach and contumelious scorn. He was judicially condemned to a tremendous kind of death. And it was, literally, in the midst of malefactors that He died.

What, then, is meant by the statement that Christ was “separate from sinners?” Plainly, that in respect of character He was altogether different from *them*. Partaker of the same humanity as they, in *Him*, characteristically and exclusively, it was immaculate; and thus, even while He moved in the midst of sinners, and was come to “seek and to save that which was lost,” his spirit, in some sense, dwelt apart.

This fourfold description of the moral worth and excellence of Christ corresponds to a variety of passages on the same subject in the word of God. David, addressing Jehovah respecting Messiah, calls him, “Thy Holy One,” (Psalm xvi. 10; Acts ii. 25-31, xiii.

35-37). God, by the prophet Isaiah, says, "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth!" (Isa. xlii. 1; Matt. xii. 17-21). The angel of the Nativity announced the promised Child as "that holy thing" which should be born of Mary, (Luke i. 35). At the beginning of Christ's public ministry, and towards the close of it, a voice from heaven was heard, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," (Matt. iii. 17, xvii. 5). In coming to the world, He himself exclaims, "Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O God; yea, thy law is within my heart," (Psalm xl. 7, 8; Heb. x. 5-9); and in leaving it, He thus appealed to Heaven:—"I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do," (John xvii. 4). "I have betrayed the innocent blood," said Judas, (Matt. xxvii. 4). "I find no fault in this man," said Pilate, (Luke xxiii. 4). Even Satan thus addressed Messiah, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God," (Luke iv. 34). Nor is Apostolic testimony wanting in the case. Of Christ St. Paul says, "He knew no sin," (2 Cor. v. 21); St. Peter, "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," (1 Pet. ii. 22); and St. John, "He was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin," (1 John iii. 5).

True to these descriptions is Christ's recorded history. The varied beauty, and the comprehensive and unsullied excellence, of his character as depicted in the Gospel-narratives are themselves a proof of the authenticity and truth of the wondrous story. And holding those narratives, as Christians must, to represent most accurately the character of Jesus as it actually was, O what a noble comment may they find in them on this fine descrip-

tion :—" Who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners !"

Christ was morally perfect in all the parts of his constitution. His intellect was filled with pure and lofty thoughts. His conscience was true to the dictates of eternal rectitude—quick to discern the right, and bold and strong to choose and follow it. His heart was the home, alike of the mild, and the majestic, forms of feeling. His ears were ever wont to hearken to the plaint of sorrow. With a simplicity to which ostentation and art were strangers, his eyes were bedewed with tears for human wretchedness and sin, and anon lifted up in prayer to Heaven. His hands—how busy were they in the cause of goodness and of God ! And even as, in the ark, the stony tablets of the law were kept, so in the soul of Jesus that good and righteous law found a habitation and a home. " Thy law," He could honestly and truly say, " Thy law is within my heart," (Psalm xl. 8).

How nobly did He fulfil all the social and moral relations in which He stood ! In respect of God—how pious-hearted, how busy-handed, how zealous, how submissive ! In respect of his disciples—how faithful, how compassionate, how kind ! In respect of his enemies—how meek, how merciful, how honest in reproving, how tender in beseeching ! In respect of the sinful world to which He came—how willing, for its sake, to live, to labour, to suffer, and to die ! And in his own personal feelings and demeanour and behaviour—how simple, how pure, and how consistent !

In all the stages and circumstances of his life, He was absolutely what He should have been. His infancy and childhood were free from the taint of sin. His boyhood, how beautiful ! His manhood, how majestic ! In

prosperity, how unearthly was He in his tastes and habitudes! In adversity, how meek, and patient, and resigned! In persecution, how dignified, and yet how placid! In suffering, how sensitive, and yet how uncomplaining! In death, the radiance of moral glory kindled up the awful darkness which encompassed Him, and "there was a rainbow round about the" Cross, even as there is "a rainbow round about the Throne." The sun never scorched the verdure of his leaves, the storm never scattered the blossoms of his beauty. The waters might now be tranquil, and anon they might swell into a storm; but unmoved, immovable, the majestic Rock still stood. The skies might be calm and bright, or clouds might darken, and raging tempests might sweep across them; but still, the glorious Orb of day was in his place.

Every class of virtues was nobly realized in Christ.—In *Him* the *devotional* virtues were perfect and complete. Prayer was his recreation and delight. Even when "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him," He gave Jehovah thanks, (Luke xxii. 17, 19). And "truly," his "fellowship was with the Father."—In *Him*, too, the *active* virtues were gloriously displayed. The exclamation of his boyhood might serve as a general motto for his earthly history:—"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" His aims were high, his heart was earnest, and his hand was busy. "The work of Him that sent Him" was his regular, his uniform pursuit. He "went about doing good," (Acts x. 38).—And in the *passive* virtues, how pre-eminently great was Jesus! How "meek and lowly in heart!" How boldly did He face the danger to which Heaven and Duty called Him! How calmly did He bear the abuse

of man ! How patiently did He submit to the hand of God ! “ Abba, Father, not my will, but thine be done,” “ The cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it ?” were not only the memorable expressions of his tongue, but also the genuine spirit of his soul.

It is indeed a glorious character, the character of Christ—fitter for a seraphic harp, than for a human pen, to celebrate. In his gentleness, He was great—in his greatness, He was gentle. A Dove he was, in respect of the milder elements of excellence—in respect of his majestic flight, an Eagle. Truly, He was “ the Lamb of God,” and yet “ the Lion of the tribe of Judah,” (John i. 29 ; Rev. v. 5.) The moral glory of Divinity, and the perfect virtue of an unsullied human nature, met in *Him*. The Human softened the outburst of the Divine ; and the Divine ennobled and sustained the Human. He is “ the chief among ten thousand,” He is “ altogether lovely.”

True, Jesus was baptized. But not that any sins of his might be washed away, but that He might leave us an example, He “ went down into the water.” True, He was tempted. But in the struggle with Satan, He “ triumphed gloriously ;” and when the sacred writer tells us, chapt. iv. 15, that Christ “ was tempted like as we are,” he forthwith adds, “ yet without sin.” True, He was angry. But it was because of his dislike to sin, and his very anger was a virtuous emotion of his pure and generous heart. True, He sternly rebuked the hypocrite. But “ faithful were the wounds ” which He inflicted, and He spake as the Representative and Ambassador of God. True, He “ was made in the likeness of sinful flesh.” But the “ likeness ” was not the reality, and it was because He was the sinless One that, as if himself a sinner, He bore those sufferings which, after all, were the recom-

pence of sins of which not He, but those in whose place He stood, were guilty. True, an apostle tells us that Christ "was made a curse," and even that "He was made sin," (2 Cor. v. 21; Gal. iii. 13). But the very explanation that, by being made a curse, He "redeemed" others "from the curse of the law," and that it was in order that sinners might be "made the righteousness of God in Him" that He himself "was made sin," indicates the personal sinlessness and worth of Him respecting whom these wondrous things are said. True, in one of the Psalms, Messiah says:—"Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me." But He is to be understood as thereby denoting the imputed sins which, as the Surety and Representative of other men, He bore.

2. Christ, in this passage, is exhibited as standing in a certain relation to God:—"The Son."

It has been shown, under chapt. i. 2, that, in respect, both of his humanity and of his divinity, Christ was the Son of God. Thus intimately related to the Eternal Sire, and thus personally dignified and glorious, was the Victim and High Priest here described. It was against Jehovah's "Fellow" that Jehovah's "sword" awoke, (Zech. xiii. 7). It was "the Son" who was made an High Priest. O the mercy of the Father! O the condescension of the Son! O the worth of the Priest! O the virtue of the Sacrifice!

3. Christ's appointment to the high-priesthood is here set forth:—He was "made by the word of the oath which was since the law;" He was "consecrated for evermore."

The definite and emphatic phrase "the oath" obviously denotes some solemn adjuration of which mention has been already made, or which the reader might easily identify. The oath thus pointedly referred to is that contained in the 110th Psalm, and quoted in ver. 21. By this oath, which had no counterpart in the call or constitution of the Levitical priests, was Jesus ushered into his sacerdotal work; and thus both the importance of that work, and the certainty of Christ's call to it, are strikingly set forth.

The word "consecrated" naturally suggests the consecration of Aaron and his sons. Of that remarkable scene there is a minute and graphic description in the 29th chapter of Exodus. Before the assembled multitudes of Israel, the father and his sons came forth. Pure water had been prepared, and in that the chosen ones were bathed. Sacrifice, too, was offered, in expiation for their sins, and in ratification of the priestly covenant. On their heads the sacred oil was poured; and they were girt around with garments beautiful and bright. Meet emblem of the consecration of "the Son!" Fitly might the plenary communication of the influences of the Holy Ghost, with his gifts and graces, be symbolized by fragrant oil and gorgeous robes. Such a communication was given to Jesus, when He was "made an high-priest." And his baptism and sufferings are counterparts, in some sense, of the water and the sacrifice. But in *his* case, there was this great and momentous peculiarity—that, whereas the Levitical priests could but hold their office till the speedily approaching hour of their departure hence, his high-priesthood was to be perpetual, He "was consecrated for evermore." Blessed consecration! O surely, a

nobler company than that of the assembled Israelites looked on to witness it—"the powers and principalities in heavenly places!"

4. Our high-priest's sacrifice is specified :—"Who needeth not daily, as those high-priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this He did once, when He offered up himself."

In the case of the Levitical Constitution, there was an essential deficiency, both in the high-priest, and in the sacrifice. "The law made men high-priests who had infirmity"—the best of them were not only physically, but morally, infirm—they were all weak and dependent, and, at the same time, sinful and unworthy. And as for the offerings which they laid on Jehovah's altar, these were but brute animals, or inanimate things. Accordingly, they needed, (1.) To offer for themselves, as well as for the people; and (2.) To repeat the sacrifices "daily."

It is different, the sacred writer says, with Christ. Being "the Son," as well as absolutely pure and eminently excellent, He was, both as High Priest and as Sacrifice, of a far nobler order than was realized in the Old Economy.

Jesus did not offer for himself. This conclusion necessarily follows from the fact that He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." It has been supposed, indeed, that the terms in which Christ's offering is here associated with that which was rendered by the Levitical high-priests, first for their own sins, and then for the people's, imply that, in some sense, Christ offered for sins of his own, and that, as He died in consequence of the feebleness of that human nature

which, as the Saviour of sinners, He assumed, He may be said to have offered for himself. But, (1.) To die in consequence of the feebleness of the human frame is an altogether different thing from that which is here exclusively spoken of—the presentation, in the character of a high-priest, of sacrifice to God; (2.) To understand by “sins” the sinless infirmities of human nature is quite unwarranted; (3.) The association of parts in the description does not at all require the adoption of the idea that, as the Levitical priests offered for their own sins as well as for the people’s, so did Christ—for the antecedent to, “this he did once,” may be the simple expression, “to offer up sacrifice.”

But, although Christ did not offer sacrifice for any sins of his own, sacrifice He *did* offer—sacrifice “for the sins of the people.” In *his* case, three things essential to propitiatory sacrifice meet and are combined. A victim was put to death. That dying victim was presented to God, as an offended Lawgiver and King. Moreover, there was, so to speak, an interchange between the victim and the sinner. The Son of Man, entering the furnace, extinguishes the flame. The nobler Jonah, cast into the ocean, quells the storm. Looking on those whose sins have been imputed to the Substitute, and to whom his vicarious righteousness has been applied, Justice frowns no more, and Mercy smiles complacently—the former drops her thunderbolt, and the latter folds the believing sinner in her arms.

But how is the sacrifice so efficacious? “Christ offered up himself.” This statement suggests the transcendent dignity of the Offerer and the transcendent worth of the Offering, and thus explains how the sacrifice specified has wrought out such glorious results—has secured

such incalculable good. The statement also indicates the spontaneity of the Redeemer's death. His humiliation and sufferings are habitually represented in Scripture as voluntary. He "gave himself," (Gal. i. 4, ii. 20; Eph. v. 25; 1 Tim. ii. 6; Tit. ii. 14). He "emptied (*ἐκένωσεν*) himself," (Philip. ii. 7). In the 40th Psalm He says:—"Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O God"—"by which will," it is added, when the words are cited, Heb. x. 7-10, "by which will we are sanctified, by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." And "in the days of His flesh" He said:—"No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again," (John x. 18). True, there was a moral necessity for Christ's death; but still, it was spontaneous on *his* part. True, Jews and Gentiles combined to murder Him; but still, his death, in respect of the awful fact, and in respect of its high design, was the object of his own generous choice. This consideration vindicates the Father in the fact that "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him." And O how it manifests and magnifies the condescending mercy of the Son! "Ye know," says St. Paul, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich," (2 Cor. viii. 9).

In this passage it is affirmed, still further, that Christ offered up his sacrifice "but once," and that He did not need to repeat it daily. This statement, too, is satisfactorily accounted for by the dignity of the high-priest and the value of the sacrifice. And yet, the very fact that, "by one offering, Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," is itself a proof of his own

surpassing majesty and worth. How pointedly, too, does that fact rebuke the preposterous and criminal pretence of offering up Christ, in the Mass, as a propitiatory sacrifice !

5. The sacred writer specifies the elevation of Christ, the high-priest :—“made higher than the heavens.”

He was literally raised aloft to a sublime and distant world. He “passed through the heavens,” (chapt. iv. 14). “He ascended up far above all heavens,” (Eph. iv. 10). Through the region of the clouds, through the region of the stars, He soared, up to the pinnacles of the universe, to the innermost shrine of God. In *Him*, too, those figurative expressions have been fulfilled :—“Be thou exalted above the heavens, let thy glory be above all the earth,” (Psalm lvii. 5). He is “extolled, and made very high,” (Isa. lii. 13). He is “head over all things to the church,” (Eph. i. 22). His name is “to be remembered in all generations,” (Psalm xlv. 17). He is “crowned with glory and honour,” (Heb. ii. 9).

II. We are here taught that “such an high-priest” as is described in these particulars “became us.”

Men needed a sacrifice. If they had merely been wretched, they might have been saved by power, without atonement ; but being sinners, they must be saved, if they are saved at all, by sacrifice, by blood, by death. Needing a sacrifice, they also needed a priest to offer it. Pardon and eternal life being matters between God and man—an offended God, and a sinful creature of his hand—it was necessary that the sacrifice should be chosen, and the priest appointed, by the Deity himself. But purity in the sacrifice was essential to its acceptance ; and as the priest was to be himself the sacrifice, it was

essential—in relation to that God whose justice was to be satisfied, and whose favour was to be procured—and also in relation to man, who was, by the mighty mercy which the Substitute displayed, to be bound to Him by a responsive love which would conform the blood-bought and ransomed sinner to the Object whose propitiation awoke such tender feelings in his heart—that the priest should be “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” But a mere man—a bright archangel—a very galaxy of created and dependent spirits—could not yield adequate compensation to the offended justice, and the violated law, of Heaven, for the mighty multitude of sins committed by the mighty multitude of sinners whom God, in his mercy, chose to be the “heirs of eternal life.” “The Son,” or some one great and dignified as He, was needed for that vast achievement. Nor was his death, his propitiatory sacrifice, enough to meet all the moral wants of man. How sad would it be for the friends of Christ to have no assurance that One whom they love so well has triumphed over death and attained a crown of victory! And in reference to themselves, how comparatively dark would be their hopes, if Jesus were not exalted gloriously as their Fore-runner, their Intercessor, and their King!—Such a high-priest they needed, and such a high-priest they possess. Men had no right to expect that such would ever be provided; but such is Christ—and O surely He becomes them well! Who would not prize, and love, and honour Him? How criminal, how dangerous to reject Him! How important, how necessary, to embrace Him! Fit Object He is for the adoring praises of the Church on earth—fit Theme for the lofty halleluiahs of the Church in heaven.

CHAPTER VIII.

1. *Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; 2. A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.*

It was common with the ancient orators, after carrying on a lengthened course of argument or illustration, to sum up, within a small compass, what had been already said with greater fulness and detail. This practice was founded on the constitution and wants of the human mind; and it is no wonder that what, even in the presence of wise and learned judges, the great pleaders of antiquity thought it so suitable and convenient to employ, should be used in some of the Epistles of the New Testament, in addressing plain and unlettered men. One example occurs in the present case:—"Now, of the things which we have spoken this is the sum," or, according to a kindred meaning of the original word translated "sum" (*κεφάλαιον*), *the main point*.

In the summary, or recapitulation, here given, it is affirmed that the Christian Church had a high-priest. As the Pagans were wont to reproach the Jews with having no religious images; so the Jews were wont to reproach the Christians with having no sacrifices and no high-priest. The sacred writer answers the objection. He declares that Christians *have* a sacrifice, a nobler one than any which the Levitical law prescribed—and that they *have* a high-priest, a more illustrious one than any of Aaron's house who ever bore the mitre

on his brow. "We have," says he, "such an high-priest."

It is, of course, true that the high-priest of Christianity is "such" as is described in the concluding verses of the 7th chapter. Was it a high-priest appointed to his office by God himself—"holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners"—the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father—offering up atoning sacrifice on earth, and then gloriously translated into a loftier world—that was suitable for men? Such an high-priest they really possess. Such is offered to the very chief of sinners. Such has been appropriated by all believers; so that each of them may say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." It is obvious, however, that here, as in chapt. vii. 26, the word "such" has a prospective, instead of a retrospective, reference, and that it relates to the particulars which, in the succeeding portion of these two verses, the sacred writer specifies.

In one text of this Epistle it is affirmed, that Christ sat down "at the right hand of the Majesty on high," (chapt. i. 3); in *another*, that He is set down "at the right hand of the throne of God," (chapt. xii. 2). In the present passage, both representations are combined.

The phrase, "the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," represents God, (1.) As a Being of transcendent glory; (2.) As giving a special manifestation of his presence and perfections in heaven; and (3.) As ruling the universe which He has formed. The representation of Christ as "set down at the right hand of" Jehovah's "throne," is descriptive of the state of repose, dignity, power, and blessedness to which, as Mediator, He has been exalted. And much has his exaltation to do with

his priesthood. It is one of the overt evidences that the Father has accepted his sacrifice; and it is one of the vast securities that "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him."

"Tabernacle" is a name representative of the sacred fabric, in general, which God commanded Moses to erect. Part of it was peculiarly sacred; and that might be characteristically called "the sanctuary." This distinction is probably referred to in the expression, "the sanctuary, and the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." In this view, the "sanctuary" must be that sublime region of the universe to which Jesus, as the high-priest, has ascended. What, then, is the "tabernacle?" Some say, Christ's human nature. But Christ's human nature is obviously comprehended in the description, "the minister of the true sanctuary;" so that the tabernacle in which He ministers must be something different from that nature. Besides, like the sanctuary, it must be a locality, and one of which that sanctuary constitutes a part. The created universe, then, or that portion of it in which Christ has undertaken to execute the double function of sacrifice and intercession, is, probably, what is denoted by the "tabernacle." That tabernacle is "true"—not as if the tabernacle of Moses were unreal or deceptive, but because *it* was the shadow of which the Christian tabernacle is the substance. And it is characteristic of the latter, and indicates its surpassing grandeur, that its erection was not committed to human hands—that it was, not only planned, but also built, by God—that "the Lord pitched it, and not man."

3. *For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and*

sacrifices : wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

There was a deep necessity that Christ should "have somewhat to offer." Man was a sinner. Jehovah had decreed and declared that the soul which sinned should die. His truth and righteousness, accordingly, required that death should be the portion, either of the sinner himself, or of a substitute. Such a substitute was Christ. On Him, then, the curse required to fall, and that in the form of death, of voluntary death—*He* the sacrifice, and *He* the high-priest too.

But here the word "wherefore" points to a somewhat different necessity. This necessity has a relation to the constitution and nature of high-priesthood in the case of the Levitical Economy, and, indeed, in general. (1.) To be a high-priest, essentially implies that he who bears the office offers sacrifice ; so that sacrifice must needs enter into Christ's discharge of the high-priesthood. (2.) The Jewish high-priests, who were typical of Christ, offered sacrifice to God ; and Christ, being the Antitype, needed to do the same.

4. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law ; 5. Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle : for, See (saith he) that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

This text has been sometimes used as a proof that Christ did not become a priest until He ascended into heaven. This doctrine, however, is certainly false. In the previous part of this Epistle, He is frequently re-

presented as offering up sacrifice when He died upon the cross. In some of the other Epistles, the same view of his death is given. And the parallel drawn in the 9th chapter between Christ and the Levitical high-priest implies that the former, like the latter, after presenting bloody sacrifice in the outer part of the Tabernacle or Temple, passed into the innermost shrine, to carry on, in a different, but kindred, form, the sacerdotal work on which, in that of sacrifice, He had already entered. What, then, is meant by the statement, "If he were on earth, He should not be a priest?" The Dispensation which Jesus introduced is frequently called in the New Testament, "The kingdom of heaven"—that Economy being celestial in its origin, its aims, its objects, and its consummation. In this view, it may be, and is, contradistinguished from the Dispensation of Moses, described ver. 7-9; which might be represented as a carnal, or earthly, Economy. Now, it may be in reference to this contrast that the sacred writer speaks of "heavenly things" in the 5th verse, and, in the 4th, uses the expression, "If he were on earth." In this view, the phrase rendered, "on the earth" (*ἐπὶ γῆς*), like the corresponding adjective (*ἐπίγειος*), will mean, *earthly, terrestrial*, and the argument will be this:—If Christ, like the sons of Aaron, were of the earthly Dispensation, He would not be a priest at all; for, in that relation, there is no need of his priesthood, inasmuch as what that Economy requires is already provided for by the Levitical priesthood—to which priesthood, Jesus, not being of the tribe of Levi, cannot belong. If, however, the expression translated, "on the earth," be regarded as descriptive, not of character, but of place, a good argument, and one quite appropriate, may be thus

obtained :—If Christ, after presenting sacrifice on earth, did not ascend into heaven, then He cannot be a priest at all; not a priest of the Jewish Church—for a full order of priests has already been provided of that particular class, a class, indeed, to which Christ, not being of the tribe of Levi, cannot belong; and not the Messianic priest foretold in the Old Testament—for *He* was to be “a priest for ever,” “a priest upon his throne,” a priest who, as the Antitype of the Jewish high-priest, was, after sacrificing on the earth, to pass into the Most Holy Place, a priest who should realize the symbolic import of the work discharged by those who “served unto the example and shadow of heavenly things.”

These last words, applied to the priests of the Jewish Dispensation, are very interesting and expressive. The Economy of Moses was, as it were, the faint reflection of that of Christ. The latter was not fashioned in conformity and subserviency to the former, but the former in conformity and subserviency to the latter. The Hebrew priests, whether aware of it or not, were, in the functions they performed, representing typically, and even acting in humble accommodation to, a nobler Economy to be afterwards ushered in.

To this Economy, the sacred writer goes on to say, there was a decided reference in the admonition given by God to Moses “when he was about to make the Tabernacle :”—“See that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the Mount,” (Exod. xxv. 40). It is not absolutely necessary to understand that, on Mount Sinai, Jehovah gave to Moses a distinct bodily or mental recognition of the “heavenly things” of the Christian Economy. It may be, that the idea of those objects was only in the mind of God himself—

that, in the rules for the construction of the Tabernacle, He conformed to that idea—and that, by the express command that Moses should strictly carry out those rules, provision was made for the idea being realized, in other words, for the heavenly things “to whose shadow and example” the priests of the Tabernacle were “to serve,” being typically set forth. The language, however, is in favour of supposing that God actually imparted to Moses a vision, whether in the form of outward signs or in that of purely mental conceptions, of the principal objects in the Christian Dispensation which the Tabernacle was to represent. Thus early, thus earnestly, did He who “seeth the end from the beginning” hold up before his chosen race the system on which human salvation so essentially depends; and, in his wisdom and condescending mercy, what He shadowed forth by emblematic signs, He also foretold by prophetic oracles.

6. *But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.*

This verse, as connected with the previous context, is in favour of the idea that the distinction in ver. 4, 5, is between two different *kinds* of priesthood—an earthly and a heavenly.

The word here rendered “covenant” (*διαθήκη*) does not necessarily involve the idea of a federal and conditional compact between two parties; but there certainly is something of the federal and the conditional in the Economy of which Jesus is the Mediator. Man and God needed to be reconciled; and, in reference to that great and glorious issue, Christ is the Surety and Representative of both. Moreover, on his sacrifice

depends the fulfilment of the promises specified in ver. 10-12, and it is by the instrumentality of faith, on the part of believers, that they enjoy the accomplishment of those promises.

By the word "better," the covenant, or constitution, here specified is compared or contrasted with another. That other is the national constitution entered into by God with Israel at Sinai; as is indicated in ver. 9. Some represent the Sinaitic and the Christian Dispensations as only different administrations of one and the same covenant. And assuredly, we have the evidence of the New Testament, and of this very Epistle, for holding, (1.) That the Mosaic Economy was typical of Christ and Christianity; and (2.) That under that Economy men were saved essentially in the same way in which they are saved under the Economy of Christ—namely, by his blood being brought to bear on the sinful soul by the instrumentality of Messianic faith. But still, in the present case, one constitution, made at Sinai, is contradistinguished from another made "after those days." And so in Gal. iv. 24-26:— "These are the two covenants," or constitutions, (*ἡ ἑνὴν καὶ ἡ ἑτέρα*): "the one from mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." The covenant, or constitution, of Sinai, as, in the same Epistle, St. Paul avers, did not supersede the promise made four hundred and thirty years before that system was established; and in many of the ceremonial rites which it required, as, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, is clearly shown, it had a reference to Christ. But it is

as distinct from that future covenant, or constitution, towards which it emblematically pointed, that the Sinaitic covenant is here described ; or rather, the covenant, or constitution, of Sinai is set forth as not identical with the typical Economy, but as itself a complete and independent arrangement made with the whole nation of the Jews—requiring from them the observance of certain moral and ceremonial rules, and promising temporal prosperity to them on condition of the observance of those rules. Than this constitution, the sacred writer here says, the constitution made with the true Israel in reference to the pardon of sin, the sanctification of the soul, and the attainment of everlasting life, is “better.” And how appropriately is this comparative epithet applied ! The promises were better, the privileges were better, and the security for attaining them was better.

Of this “better covenant,” or constitution, Christ is called “the Mediator.” He *is* so in respect of all the three offices He holds ; but it is chiefly in relation to his priesthood—the office in which He presented sacrifice on earth, and makes intercession in heaven—that the sacred writer here regards Him. In this office, as in the others also, Christ has a “ministry ;” and to his ministry, as to the covenant, or constitution, of which He is “the Mediator,” the epithet “better” is applied. The superiority of his ministry to that of the Levitical high-priests lies, partly, in the superior character of the system, and partly, in the superior work of the minister.

7. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. 8. For, finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the

house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 9. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. 10. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: 11. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. 12. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

The sacred writer cannot mean to say, that there was anything morally wrong in the Sinaitic covenant, or constitution, as made by God with Israel. Its Divine origin secured its perfect consistency with moral rectitude, and its adaptation to the end for which it was established. But, in relation to a higher end, it was imperfect. Its imperfection in this respect gave occasion for "the better covenant," or constitution, of which Christ is Mediator; and the introduction of the latter indicates the insufficiency of the former. Except for such insufficiency in the one, as is here affirmed, "no place should have been sought for the other."

As the system was imperfect, so the Jews, to whom it was given, were culpable. The insufficiency of the former did not absolve the latter from the obligation of observing it, so long as God upheld it. It was ordained by God, and ordained for an important end. And yet, "they continued not in the covenant." In this they were disobedient, ungrateful, and rebellious. In the

very oracle, accordingly, in which Jehovah, by Jeremiah, promises a new and better covenant, (Jeremiah xxxi. 31-34), nay, in the very passage from that oracle which is here adduced, they are reproved by Heaven—God “finds fault with them.” Some think, however, that the “finding fault” specified in this passage relates, rather to the system, than to the people; and assuredly, the rendering, “for, finding fault, He saith to them,” is quite consistent with the original text, (*μεμψόμενος γὰρ αὐτοῖς λέγει*).

The expressions, “the house of Israel and the house of Judah,” are to be viewed as expressly relating to the Jewish people. It is surely alike unwise and unsafe to banish that people, specifically considered, from the prophetic announcements which to *them* were specifically addressed, of bright and blessed days. As, in this Epistle to the Hebrews, the sacred writer specially adapts himself, in the style of his illustrations, to the Hebrews to whom it was at first addressed—so the prophets, in addressing the Jews, are wont to isolate *them*, and, both in warning and in promise, peculiarly to specify their case. These very prophets, however, clearly intimate that with Gentiles as well as Jews the Christian covenant was to be made; and what prophecy foretells in this respect, the evangelical histories and the apostolic letters represent as realized. In Christ Jesus “there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision,” (Col. iii. 11). “He is our peace, who hath made both one,” (Eph. ii. 14). To multitudes of both, the promises of the new covenant have already been accomplished; and to all of both who believe in Jesus, these promises, which “are yea and amen in Him” (2 Cor. i. 20), are sure to be fulfilled. And what are those pro-

mises? Jeremiah, and the writer of this Epistle, in quoting from him, specify four.

I. Jehovah says:—"I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."

The grace of the Gospel by no means supersedes the obligation or importance of practical obedience. In the Christian system, the moral law survives. Of that law the doctrines of the Gospel, and the privileges of believers, are strong and tender enforcements. For a Christian to be, in respect of obligation, free from the moral law would be the very reverse of a blessing; and to say that a man is a true Christian, but not morally pure, would be a contradiction in terms. Very glorious is this first promise of the evangelical covenant; and in every believing man it is realized, in the fact that he knows, loves, appreciates, and applies, his Father's law. As, in the ark of the covenant, the two stony tablets lay, so, in the Christian soul the precepts which were inscribed upon them are deposited by God's own hand.

II. In still further explanation of the new covenant, Jehovah says:—"I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."

In some sense, these words were realized to Israel under the old covenant. But, as here used, they constitute one of the "better promises," and are spiritual in their reference and import. Thus considered, they intimate, (1.) That God, in the plenitude of his glorious perfections, will guide, guard, govern, sustain, cheer, and glorify, believers; and (2.) That they shall not only "walk in the light of his countenance," but also yield meek, and affectionate, and dutiful submission to his law. Majestic promise!

III. It is added:—"They shall not teach, every man

his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest."

There is no reason to believe that, in any era previous to the consummation of all things, the communication of instruction by oral discourse will be utterly suspended and set aside. The consummate standard of the word of God requires believers themselves to come within the sphere of such instruction; and by means of it, even when they receive little or no addition to their actual knowledge, they are edified, and strengthened, and refreshed. The former part of this promise is to be explained by a reference to the latter part of it. Believers all "know the Lord"—they are all acquainted with the Scriptural character of that God to whom they have betaken themselves, and in whom they have found salvation. Wherefore, they do not need to be taught that character as if they knew it not; nay, in point of fact, it is not the practice and order of things among true Christians for each to unfold the Divine character to his believing fellow in the form of the communication of knowledge on the subject—and for this obvious reason, that their character and condition imply that such knowledge they already possess in common.

And O what glorious knowledge is this—the knowledge of the Lord!—It is transcendently sublime. If the knowledge of God's works be grand, how much grander the knowledge of himself!—It is eminently practical. Thence are derived the tenderest and most powerful motives to a life of obedient piety.—It is very sweet and precious. The God whom the believer knows is his own immutable and immortal Friend and Father. Knowing Him thus, how can he fail to triumph and rejoice, and feel even the most awful attributes of the

Divine Nature the securities of his soul, and the pledges of his safety ?

IV. This series of good and glorious promises terminates with the words:—"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

Pardon and justification are here guaranteed by God—a privilege on which the enjoyment of all the other benefits of the Christian salvation depend. The figurative language, "I will remember no more," is, in this connection, delightfully expressive. It is similar to those other figurative descriptions wherein Jehovah speaks of "casting" iniquities "into the depths of the sea," and of sweeping them away, "as a thick cloud," from the heretofore dark and troubled, but now bright and placid, firmament, (Isa. xlv. 22 ; Mic. vii. 19).

13. *In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.*

Many of the professedly Christian Jews showed a disposition to stand both by the old covenant and the new. Here the sacred writer puts the Hebrews on their guard. And, indeed, the "carnal ordinances" of the one would have miserably clogged and fettered the spiritual processes and mild enjoyments of the other. Now, too, that the types had found their consummation in Christ and Christianity, why should those outward emblematic signs be still retained? Good cause had the Jews to be thankful that the typical ceremonial had been given them; good reason, also, had they to be thankful that the time had now arrived when the stars were sinking into the light of the newly-risen Sun.

CHAPTER IX.

1. *Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.*

In this chapter the sacred writer does these two things:—(1.) He points out the inadequacy of the services of the Tabernacle, and the institutions of Judaism, to take away sin and make the conscience clear, and (2.) He exhibits those services, and these institutions, as typical of Christ and Christianity. In order to gain these two objects, it was requisite that he should describe the Jewish Tabernacle, its visible objects, and its sacerdotal rites. This he now proceeds to do.

I. He specifies “ordinances of divine service.”

The existence of God, and man’s relation to Him, lay the latter under a necessary obligation to worship and serve the former. But as to the right manner of yielding to God the homage and adoration due, man is greatly ignorant, and miserably apt to err. Wherefore, under all the Dispensations which Jehovah has instituted in the Church, He has ordained certain sacred rites and services. Levitical modes of worship have passed away; but “ordinances of divine service” belong as truly to the Economy of Christ as to the Economy of Moses. To be without such ordinances would be no desirable deliverance, but would be itself a curse and a calamity. That, with respect to secret prayer, domestic piety, and public worship, God has given such clear and explicit rules, is good cause for gratitude and praise. How criminal, how perilous, to despise or neglect the ordinances which, in the exercise of such wisdom and tender-mercy, He has given!

II. There is reference to "a worldly sanctuary."

The name is descriptive of the Tabernacle erected in the wilderness. That Tabernacle was "a Sanctuary," or holy place, in respect of the twofold fact, that Jehovah made it his habitation and his home, and that his ministers there performed the services of Divine worship. It was "worldly," inasmuch as its materials were earthly and its ordinances were "carnal." That sacred house — fashioned according to Heaven's own plan, reared of materials brought together, in bountiful profusion, by the people, and skilfully constructed under the superintending care of Moses—has passed away. So also has the more magnificent Temple that succeeded it. The very Economy to which it belonged "waxed old," and is abolished by the power which framed it. But all of them were "figures, for the time then present," of "better things to come." Now, to a great extent, those better things are realized. The promised Economy of the promised Christ is now established in the world. But, as it has its "ordinances of Divine service," so has it its sanctuaries too. Many of them, indeed, are humble fabrics to the eye. Nor are we required to clothe them, as even the Tabernacle of the wilderness was clothed, with splendour. Christian worship, in its noblest and most characteristic form, is a simple and spiritual thing. That typical design which God required to be embodied in the very fabric where He chose to dwell, is required no more in sanctuaries erected for his service. Christianity, too, is a missionary faith, and demands a large proportion of what we can afford of earthly substance for the diffusion of its glorious truths. Still, it is meet that sanctuaries, and graceful sanctuaries too, should rear their heads in

honour of the Lord, and welcome worshippers within their walls. On the mountains and the muirs where many of our persecuted fathers worshipped, we, if persecuted, might be called to worship too. But in times of peace, houses of prayer are what circumstances permit, and propriety requires. Such we have—how important rightly to employ them! “Worldly” they, in some sense, are; but why should they not be “heavenly places,” after all? Of such a spot—with its spiritual worship, its glorious Gospel, and its present and presiding Saviour—many have had cause to say, “This is none other than the house of God, yea, this is the gate of heaven.”

2. *For there was a tabernacle made: the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shew-bread; which is called the Sanctuary.*

Here, besides referring to the erection of the Tabernacle in general, the sacred writer proceeds to specify its two distinct compartments, and the furniture pertaining respectively to each. And first, he describes the outer division of the sacred edifice, more especially by a specification of the principal objects there deposited.

I. He specifies “the candlestick.”

This is described in Exod. xxv. 31-39, xxxvii. 17-24. It was made of pure gold. It was sevenfold; and in this case, as in so many others, seven was certainly used as the perfect number. Moreover, its lamps were to be kept perpetually burning. Bright and brilliant as was this sacred candelabra, it was, in relation to the spiritual wants of the soul, considered essentially and in itself, a “weak and unprofitable thing.” But if “meats, and drinks, and days, were a shadow” of which “the body is of Christ,” (Col. ii. 17)—if “the priests

served unto the example and shadow of heavenly things," (Heb. viii. 5)—if "the tabernacle was a figure for the time then present," (Heb. ix. 9)—if "the vessels of the ministry" were "patterns of things in the heavens," (Heb. ix. 23)—and if "the law had a shadow of good things to come," though "not the very image of the things," (Heb. x. 1)—surely, even in the candlestick and the other objects specified in ver. 2-5, we are entitled and bound to recognize symbolic representations of what are realized in Christ and the Economy which He has ushered in. And how beautifully descriptive is the golden, sevenfold, ever-burning candlestick, of Jesus as the world's great Light! (Luke ii. 32; John i. 7-9, viii. 12). He himself is pure, and bright, and beautiful. As a Prophet, He is perfect; and his doctrine is comprehensive and complete. From age to age his light has shone, and still it shines, upon a world which without it would indeed be dark.

II. The sacred writer specifies "the shew-bread."

This, and the table on which it lay, are described in Exod. xxv. 23-30. The shew-bread consisted of twelve loaves, renewed every week. They are strikingly representative of Christ as "the Bread of life," (John vi. 35)—the Source of nutriment and sustentation to the soul. That Bread is ever plentiful, is ever fresh, and is *shewn*, or exhibited, in the Gospel, to hungry and starving men.

III. "The table" on which the shew-bread was placed is also specified.

That table was made of a particular kind of cedar, was covered over with gold, and was surrounded with an ornamental border. It probably denoted those ordinances by which Christ, "the living Bread," is

presented to the souls of men. And oh! if the shewbread be so needful, how important to approach the table on which it lies! if Christ be so precious, how desirable to wait upon the ordinances in which He is to be found! While men shut out the light which reveals and manifests the Saviour, how can they realize and receive Him? And if they refuse to enter the temple on earth, what marvel if they be excluded from the temple in heaven?

3. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; 4. Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; 5. And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

The *first* veil of the Tabernacle was suspended in front of the outer door which led into the Holy Place, or exterior compartment of the sacred house. The *second* veil separated that compartment from "the Holiest of all."

This innermost shrine has two other names, having the same signification as that which it here receives. Elsewhere it is called, "the Most Holy Place," and, "the Holy of holies"—the latter of which expressions has the force of a superlative, just as "Vanity of vanities" means, the greatest of vanities, and "King of kings" means, the mightiest of kings. What constituted the innermost part of the Tabernacle so pre-eminently sacred was the furniture it contained, and especially, the Shekinah, or visible representation of Jehovah's presence. Its furniture is minutely spe-

cified, though not copiously described, in this very passage.

“The golden censer” may be here associated with “the Holiest of all” on the simple ground that it was used exclusively in the annual service which the high-priest performed in that sacred shrine. But it is not improbable that the particular censer referred to actually lay in the Holy of holies from year to year. In respect of its symbolical and typical reference, it seems to have denoted the presentation of “the prayers of saints” before the throne of God, in connection with the consecrating virtue of the Saviour’s merit, (Rev. viii. 3, 4). The word here rendered “censer” (*Συμιατήριον*)—which, in the Septuagint, (2 Chron. xxvi. 19; Ezek. viii. 11), as also in Thucydides (vi. 46), Diodorus Siculus (xiii. 3), and Josephus (*Antiq.* iv. 7, 4), must certainly be so understood—is used by Philo, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, to denote the altar of incense; and some interpreters have supposed that altar to be here meant. But, in the Tabernacle, the altar of incense did not stand in the Holy of holies; and, although it was placed on the verge of that sacred shrine, and although its use had a relation to the Most Holy Place, (Exod. xxx. 6; 1 Kings vi. 22), yet in these facts there is not sufficient warrant for saying that “the Holiest of all” *had, or held, that altar.* It is greatly better, therefore, to understand, with Theophylact, Luther, Kuinoel, Stuart, our English translators, and a multitude of other expositors, the golden censer. “The ark of the covenant”—which is described, Exod. xxv. 10-22, xxxvii. 1-5—was a chest of moderate dimensions, covered with a lid which constituted the mercy-seat, or visible throne of God. It is associated with the Hebrew “covenant,” or constitu-

tion, as being one of its most remarkable signs and seals, and as containing those sacred tablets on which that moral law which constituted so important a part of the system was inscribed. The ark was held in special veneration; and certain of the most interesting and affecting portions of Jewish history—for example, the narratives of the death of Uzzah and the last hours of Eli, (1 Sam. iv. 18; 2 Sam. vi. 6, 7)—are indicative of its awful sacredness. Considering that the very name which here denotes the mercy-seat, or lid of the ark, is applied to Christ when, in Rom. iii. 25, He is called “a propitiation” (*ἱλαστήριον*), and considering how well fitted the contents of the ark were to represent the fulness that is treasured up in Christ, it is not unreasonable to consider the Divine Redeemer as probably denoted by the sacred chest. As being “overlaid round about with gold,” it was the better adapted to shadow forth his grandeur, his beauty, and his value.

The sacred writer proceeds to specify “the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant.” These are described, Exod. xvi. 32-34, xxxi. 18, xxxiv. 28; Numb. xvii. 1-10; Deut. x. 1, 2. It is said in 1 Kings viii. 9:—“There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Moreb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.” Here, however, not only the stony tablets, but the pot of manna, and Aaron’s rod, are said to have been in the ark. That this was really the case, as appears from certain of the most eminent Rabbis, was traditionally held among the Jews. One of these Rabbis maintains, in accordance with the belief that the manna and the rod, as well as

the tables, were really deposited in the ark, that the import of the apparently opposing statement in 1 Kings is this—that no other part of the Mosaic law except that inscribed on the stony tablets was placed within the sacred chest. If, however, this view cannot be considered quite satisfactory, it may be supposed that, in the course of generations, whether by a rash act on the part of sacerdotal hands, or by the fact of the ark having fallen into the power of enemies, the manna and the rod had been removed from their original and appropriate depository. The manna—as denoting spiritual food, “the hidden manna” which Christ will give “to him that overcometh,” (Rev. ii. 17); the blossoming rod of Moses and Aaron—as denoting sacerdotal and kingly power, the power to punish and the power to protect and guide; the stony tables—as denoting the immutable and immortal law of Heaven; and the intimate association of all with the ark—of which Christ himself may be regarded as the antitype—are beautifully significant of those treasures of Law and Gospel, of that moral sanctity and that sweet experience, which appertain to *Him*, and which all who, really and in right earnest, go to Him receive.

The Cherubim are described, Exod. xxv. 18-20; 1 Kings viii. 6, 7. There is considerable uncertainty, however, with respect both to their visible appearance, and to their symbolic import. As associated with the mercy-seat, and with the Shekinah,—which is probably denoted in this passage, and also in Rom. ix. 4, by the word “glory,” though Kuinoel, Stuart, and others, here consider the phrase, “of glory,” just equivalent to, “glorious”—they may naturally be considered as signifying those holy angels who are represented as stand-

ing around the throne, and ministering in the presence, of Jehovah, in that lofty world of which the Holy of holies was the meet representation. This was long the favourite view among evangelical divines. Latterly, the Cherubim have been regarded by some as representing the glorified Church of believing men—and that, specially on the ground that blood was to be sprinkled on them. The general import is strikingly exhibited in Rev. v. 8-12, vii. 9-12.

6. *Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.*

The sacred writer here specifies the ordination—that is, according to the import of the original word, (*κατασκευασμένων*), the construction and arrangement—of the Tabernacle and its furniture. That is minutely described in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. It consisted in four things. (1.) God himself, in the exercise of his transcendent wisdom and condescension, not only required the erection of the house and the preparation of the furniture, but also vouchsafed to give a plan and pattern; (2.) The people brought together large materials, in the form of wood, and stone, and silver, and gold, and precious jewelry; (3.) These materials were committed to the hands of cunning workmen, that the arts of ingenuity and taste might be brought to bear on the construction of this illustrious work; (4.) The execution was carried on under the superintendence of the master-mind of Moses—a mind not only endowed with high intellectual gifts and moral graces, but supernaturally inspired by the Divine Source of wisdom, intelligence, and truth.

“The priests”—that is, the sons of Aaron, with the exception of such of them as were unfitted, by certain blemishes, for sacerdotal work—are here said to have gone “into the first tabernacle”—that is, into the outer of the two divisions of the sacred edifice. They had work to do, indeed, in one of the exterior courts besides, for there was the altar of burnt-offerings on which they presented the bloody sacrifices; but the object which the sacred writer has in view leads him to refer particularly to the functions which they discharged in the interior of the Tabernacle.

The word “always,” as here applied, does not mean that the work described was, literally, without any cessation. Like the same word, as applied to the duty of prayer, and the corresponding phrase, “without ceasing,” (Luke xviii. 1; 1 Thess. v. 17; 2 Thess. i. 11), it denotes the habitual, regular, and continuous character of the process specified.

The priests who entered thus, “accomplished the service of God.” Within the sanctuary, they daily offered incense and trimmed the candlestick, and weekly renewed the shew-bread.

Christian ministers are not, properly speaking, priests. But there is an obvious resemblance between the priests of the Old Economy and the pastors of the New. Both orders, alike, derive their authority from God. Both have daily and weekly work. Both are called to represent God to the people, and to represent the people to God. And as the true-hearted worshippers under the Old Dispensation cried, “Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness,” (Psalm cxxxii. 9), so must believers under the New comply with the ministerial request, “Brethren, pray for us,” (1 Thess. v. 25; 2 Thess. iii. 1).

But, in some sense, all true Christians are priests, and they are so represented in the New Testament, (1 Pet. ii. 5, 9; Rev. i. 6). As "a royal priesthood," they have both kingly and priestly work to do. Weekly, daily, "always," they must "accomplish the service of God." There is the service of humility:—"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise," (Psalm li. 17). There is the service of prayer:—"Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice," (Psalm cxli. 2). There is the service of praise:—"So will we render the calves of our lips," (Hos. xiv. 2). There is the service of deeds of usefulness:—"To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased," (Heb. xiii. 16). There is the service of self-consecration:—"I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service," (Rom. xii. 1).

7. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people.

The high-priest, besides being the superintendent of the ordinary priesthood, is here said to have had the peculiar function assigned him of entering into the Holy of holies. As the people were not allowed to go into the sanctuary, so the body of the priests were not allowed to enter the Most Holy Place. The former might not pass through the *outer*, the latter might not pass through the *inner*, veil.

It was, too, only "once a year" that the high-priest

himself entered the holiest place of all. The meaning, however, cannot be, that he made no more than one actual transit or entrance into that sacred shrine in the course of the year. He was to enter with the blood of the victims which he had offered, outside, for himself—the heifer and the ram; and then, returning to the altar of burnt-offering, he was to present a sacrifice for the people—one of the two appointed goats—and with its blood again to enter the Most Holy Place. Indeed, as he had also to carry the censer, and the burning coals required for presenting it, into that sacred shrine, and as that seems to indicate that his hands, at the time, must have been disengaged from the work of carrying and sprinkling the blood; it is probable that, on the memorable day referred to, he entered three, if not, as a Jewish tradition states to have actually been the case, four times. “Once” merely means, *on one occasion*. That occasion was, the great day of expiation; which occurred on the 10th day of the seventh month—a month corresponding to our September. The service of that day is described in Lev. xvi. It comprehended, not only the bloody sacrifices in one of the outer courts, and the sprinklings and incense-offerings of the Holy of holies, but also the discharge of the live-goat into the wilderness, bearing the sins of the people. That service was not only very striking, but also admirably expressive of the priestly work, and the propitiatory virtue, of Jesus Christ. In one point here specified, however, the two cases fail to correspond. The high-priest of the law offered for his own sins as well as for the people’s; whereas, Jesus had no sins of his own for which to offer. And yet—marvel of marvels!—He made, as it were, the

sins of other men his own, (Isa. liii. 6, 11 ; 2 Cor. v. 21 ; Gal. iii. 13 ; 1 Pet. ii. 24).

8. *The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.*

The first clause of this verse is one of many proofs of the personality of the Holy Ghost. The kind of evidence here presented for the doctrine is similar to that contained in a series of texts in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of the Gospel of St. John, attributing personal acts to the Holy Spirit, (John xiv. 16, 17, 26, xv. 26, xvi. 7-11, 13, 14).

The plan of the Tabernacle, and the appointment of the Tabernacle-service, were Divine. And as, in the introduction of the Christian Economy, Jehovah, by the Holy Ghost, constituted the human nature, and inspired the soul, of Jesus, as well as qualified the apostles to preach the Gospel to the world, so, in the introduction of the Mosaic system, He, by the same Divine Person, arranged both the sacred house, and the mode of performing its sacerdotal rites.

What the Holy Ghost is here represented as “signifying” by the arrangement specified in verse 7, has sometimes been misunderstood. Most certainly, the sacred writer does not mean to say, either, that good men who lived before the advent of Christ did not find access, during life by communion with God, and at death by the actual transition of their souls, into a high and happy world, Jehovah’s dwelling-place—or, that they did not, by faith, to some extent realize the promised Saviour, and actually obtain, by means of it, an interest in his atoning blood. Neither of these things

is consistent with what is said in the Old Testament, and in the New, with respect to the attainableness of eternal glory by the Hebrew ancients, and the way, the only way, in which the sinner can be saved; and certainly, neither is affirmed in the present text. But, in like manner as, in the times of the Old Testament, only a comparatively faint disclosure had been given of the world to come, and "Christ brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel," so, the way of holding spiritual fellowship with God on earth, and of being admitted to a more intimate and delightful communion with Him in heaven, was, until Christianity was ushered in, comparatively dark and dim. The Christian Economy has greatly cleared up and explained that momentous matter, more especially by three things:—(1.) The actual advent and sacrifice of Messiah; (2.) The proclamation of the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles; (3.) The special communication of the Holy Ghost.

9. *Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; 10. Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.*

The ancient Tabernacle, it is here affirmed, "was a figure." Its chief glory was not its exquisite grace and its gorgeous splendour. It had a typical design. It stood before the eyes of men a monitor and representation of what, in "the fulness of the times," was to be produced and ushered in by God. The carnal symbolized the spiritual—the earthly, the heavenly—the Mosaic, the Christian. In "the time then present,"

some minds, it is probable, recognized the reference, or, at any rate, were led by the earlier institutions, to cherish vivid conceptions, and elevated hopes, of the Messianic age, and of Messiah himself as, for *them* no less truly than for their descendants, a great and glorious Saviour. That time has long passed away; yet, on the typical Dispensation men may still look back in quest of instruction and refreshment for their souls. The study and contemplation of it, in the light, and by the guidance, of the Christian Revelation, may serve, (1.) To give an enlarged and impressive view of the wisdom and foreknowledge of God; (2.) To illustrate the connection between the Old Testament and the New; (3.) To indicate the estimate formed by God himself of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ; (4.) To lead the mind, in a varied and interesting way, into profitable and pleasant thoughts of that Divine Redeemer.

And yet, "the gifts and sacrifices" of the Jewish Tabernacle are here represented as not able "to make him that" observed them "perfect, as pertaining to the conscience." Essentially, or in themselves, they had no justifying virtue or power at all. And, even as types, they failed to afford distinct and complete conceptions of the only adequate way of salvation.

The words "Which stood" are a supplement of the translators, and are printed as such in the English version. The supplement is not a very felicitous one. "Meats and drinks" are essentially different from "gifts and sacrifices," and therefore it seems advisable to understand by the words rendered "only in" (*μόνον ἐπί*), *only in addition to, having for their only accompaniments.*

What is called "the time then present" was to be succeeded by another time, called "the time of reforma-

tion." This latter time has come—a time of clear light and lofty privilege. The word "reformation" is one which evangelical Protestants are wont to associate with a memorable era in the history of Europe—the era when Heaven interposed, by the instrumentality of men of remarkable gifts and graces, to beat back the tide of corruption which had rushed over almost all that was known upon the earth by the noble name of the Church of Christ, and to restore the human mind to the atmosphere of saving truth and spiritual freedom. This use of the word "reformation," however, does not exactly correspond to that in which it is here employed. There was nothing to purify or correct in the Mosaic system as instituted and ordained by God. It was altogether worthy of the mind from which it sprang. In relation to its own ends and objects, it was admirably wise and good. At the advent of Christ, however, there was a *re-formation*. At that memorable epoch, a mighty and momentous change was made. That change is emphatically described in the 44th Paraphrase of the Scottish Presbyterian Psalmody:—

" 'Tis finished! Legal worship ends,
And gospel-ages run;
All old things now are passed away,
And a new world begun."

11. *But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; 12. Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

There is a twofold relation between the Jewish system

and the advent of Jesus Christ. There is the relation of contrast, and there is the relation of fulfilment. When Christ came, He ushered in a far nobler and better Economy than that of Moses—that idea is denoted in these verses by the connective word “But.” And, in Christ’s coming, the types of the law, and many of the predictions of the prophets, were fulfilled—that idea is denoted by the very name “Christ” and the participial expression “being come.” It was as the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One, that the Great Deliverer was expected by the Jews; and *The Comer*, or, *The Coming One*, was a name by which He was definitely known. “Art thou the Coming One” (ὁ ἐρχόμενος), said the disciples of John to Jesus, “or look we for another?” (Matt. xi. 3).

The glorious tidings, “Christ is come,” have now burst upon the world. When angels sang the birth-day song of Jesus, the burden of their song was this, “Christ is come.” When Simeon clasped the infant Saviour in his arms, the joy and rejoicing of his heart was this, “Christ is come.” When the Baptist cried, “Behold the Lamb of God,” “The latchet of his shoes I am not worthy to unloose,” the import of his words was this, “Christ is come.” When Peter summoned Andrew to the glorious Visitant, his argument and plea were this, “Christ is come.” When Jesus, by his wondrous works and no less wondrous words, approved himself the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, He meant, “Christ is come.” When to Jews and Gentiles the apostles taught that the “kingdom of God” was at length arrived, their doctrine was, “Christ is come.” How meet that men should catch the glorious strain, and send it rolling through the world, until, as dwellers

on the Alps, on Easter-morn, make the echoes of their mountains to resound, 'The Lord is risen! the Lord is risen!' all tribes and tongues, with glad and grateful heart, shall cry, "Christ is come!"

It is not specifically and exclusively in relation to the *birth* of Christ, however, that the expression, "Christ being come," is here employed. That expression is intimately associated with the succeeding phrase, "a high-priest of good things to come." It is in the character of a high-priest, and of a high-priest whose sacerdotal work has to do with a class of objects here represented as both good and future, that Christ is described as come. Now, when, and to whom, are these things spoken of as yet "to come?" Certain good things of which Christ is high-priest are future even now. The predicted days of Millennial purity and peace—which are, assuredly, both "good," and dependent on the priesthood of Christ—are yet "to come." The celestial blessedness and glory—which are pre-eminently "good," and, at the same time, flow from the sacerdotal work of Jesus—are, in so far as living believers are concerned, still future things. It is obvious, however, that the phrase, "good things to come," denotes, comprehensively, the characteristic and peculiar privileges and advantages of the Economy of Christ, and that the stand-point from which these are here contemplated as future is the period anterior to his coming. His birth, so auspiciously expressive of "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men;" his pure and honourable life; his bitter and propitiatory death; his resurrection from the grave and ascension into glory; the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost; and the proclamation of the Gospel to Gentile and to Jew—these are among the many

“good things” which, until the advent of Messiah, were still “to come,” and of which *He* is the glorious high-priest.

But what is the “more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of” the Mosaic “building?” Owen and others suppose it to be the body, or the human nature, of our Lord. It is very true that the human body is called “the earthly house of this tabernacle,” (2 Cor. v. 1)—that it is affirmed of the eternal Word, “He was made flesh and tabernacled (ἐσκήνωσεν) among us,” (John i. 14)—that when Jesus said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,” He “spake of the temple of his body,” (John ii. 19-21), and that “in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily,” (Col. ii. 9). But, in order to perceive the regularity, and realize the appropriateness, of the comparison here instituted between the high-priest entering the Holy of holies, on the one hand, and Christ entering Heaven, on the other, it is almost necessary to understand the “Tabernacle not made with hands” to be a locality. Those regions of the universe which constitute the theatre of Christ’s sacerdotal work may be considered as the nobler Tabernacle, and the heaven of heavens as the Holiest Place of all. Christ “passed through” the firmament, as through an azure veil, and took his station, both as Monarch and as High Priest, in the latter. In that loftiest Shrine is the Throne of God, as in the innermost compartment of the earthly Tabernacle was the Mercy-seat between the Cherubim; and as, in the one, the Hebrew high-priest sprinkled blood, and offered incense, for the people, so, in the other, Jesus, as the Representative of his believing Church, “appears in the presence of God”—“a Lamb

as if it had been slain," and yet a priestly Intercessor at the Throne.

The expression, "neither by the blood of goats and calves," has a special reference to the sacrifices of the high-priest on the great day of expiation—the heifer for his own sins, and the goat for the people's. "His own blood" is a phrase which, while fitted to suggest the transcendent love of Jesus in offering up himself, also indicates the dignity and value of the sacrifice.

Christ's entrance into heaven is sometimes, in Scripture, represented as that of a triumphant King. It is here represented as that of a High Priest advancing, as it were, from the altar of burnt-offering without to the innermost shrine of all—to the place of the Ark, the Cherubim, the Throne. The relation between the one situation and the other is denoted by the expression, "having obtained eternal redemption for us."

"Redemption" has reference to a state of slavery or bondage. Such a state is that in which man naturally lies. He is held in thrall by the violated Law, by Sin, by Satan, and by God himself. "Redemption" means, deliverance by price. The price paid for man's deliverance was the blood of Jesus, (1 Cor. vi. 20; 1 Peter i. 18, 19). "*He* gave his life a ransom for many," (Matt. xx. 28), and so, "in *Him*" believers "have redemption through his blood," (Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14). The atoning sacrifice having propitiated God, fulfilled the threatenings of the law, "condemned sin in the flesh," and "spoiled principalities and powers," the captive sinner, believing in Jesus, is set free, *forever* free—for this "redemption" is "eternal," such as God will never disannul and the freeman of the Lord shall never lose. Glorious redemption! Generous Redeemer!

Who would not seek the one? Who would not magnify the other?

13. *For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; 14. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?*

The Levitical sacrifices and purifications were more than typical. They had a direct and definite end with respect to the Dispensation under which they were employed. By God's appointment, they served to free the worshipper from that ceremonial defilement which would have excluded him from many important advantages, civil and ecclesiastical. In the language of the present passage, "They sanctified to the purifying of the flesh."

In this respect, their virtue and validity entirely depended on the Divine appointment. In the case of the sacrifice of Christ, however, there was, over and above such appointment, an essential fitness to realize the end designed—a dignity, a merit, and an adaptation for vindicating and manifesting the sacredness of the law, and the righteousness of the Lawgiver, in harmony with the salvation of the sinner, such as to constitute it admirably suitable and competent as a way of working out redemption. Hence, in comparing the two—"the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of an heifer," on the one hand, and "the blood of Christ," on the other—the sacred writer logically connects the respective propositions respecting them by the phrase, "how much more."

Christ, in respect of his sacrifice, is described in four particulars. (1.) He “offered himself”—a statement expressive, both of the generosity of the Offerer, and of the value of the Offering. (2.) He “offered himself *to God*”—Jehovah being an offended party to whom, in order to propitiation, an adequate sacrifice required to be presented. (3.) He “offered himself to God *without spot*”—a fact without which a sacrifice for sin would not have been congruous to its great design, would have failed to realize, morally, what, in the typical lamb, “without blemish and without spot,” was realized physically, and would have been rejected by the righteous God. (4.) He thus “offered himself *through the eternal Spirit*”—a statement which some have referred to Christ’s own personal Divinity, but which may more naturally be applied to the connection of the Holy Spirit both with the fact, and with the character, of his offering, and, in this view, may be assigned to that class of texts in which his birth, his purity, his doctrine, his miracles, and even, apparently, his resurrection are attributed to the third Person of the Trinity, (Isa. xi. 2, 3, xlii. 1; Matt. xii. 28; Luke i. 35; Acts i. 2, x. 38; Rom. viii. 11; &c.)

By these particulars, the sacred writer exhibits and proves the competency and fitness of Christ’s blood to “purge” men’s “conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”

“Dead works” are, obviously, sinful works, and are so called as being vile, corrupt, and mischievous. What is meant by the purification of the conscience from such works is explained in chapt. x. 2:—“The worshippers, once purged, should have had no more conscience of sins.” It is not so much sanctification, then, that is

denoted by this part of the passage, as deliverance from the curse and condemnation of the law and the corresponding sense of pardon and acceptance. In the concluding words, "to serve the living God," however, personal piety and active service are specified, and that in connection, not only with "the blood of Christ"—which is habitually represented in the New Testament as having, for one of its great ends, to "purify men as a peculiar people zealous of good works," (John xvii. 19; Rom. viii. 3, 4; Tit. ii. 14; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19; &c.)—but with the purgation of the conscience—which, as a motive and an encouragement, mightily contributes to the promotion of vital godliness and devoted obedience. The epithet "living," associated with the name of God, suggests one powerful reason for serving Him. By that epithet, He is not only contradistinguished from idols, but also exhibited as possessing an intense intellectual, moral, and essential Vitality—as, accordingly, both strong to punish, and "mighty to save." It is said, chapt. x. 31, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of *the living God*;" and, 1 Tim. iv. 10, "Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in *the living God*; who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."

15. *And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.* 16. *For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.* 17. *For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.*

The expression, "For this cause," it is far more natural to associate with what is just about to be said in the 15th, than with what has been already said in the 14th, verse. Nor is the expression required in order to connect these two verses together. They are sufficiently associated by the conjunction "And."

The Greek word repeatedly rendered "covenant" in chapt. viii. 6-13 (*διαθήκη*) is here, and afterwards in ver. 20, translated "testament." The word will certainly admit of either meaning. Moreover, there is a sense in which the Gospel has somewhat of a testamentary character. In the evangelical Economy, Christ, not only by his purpose and design, but by the overt promises of the Gospel, has destined and secured an inheritance to his chosen and believing people—rendering those promises valid, and putting men in possession of this inheritance, by his own death. In one very obvious respect, however, the common case and the Christian one are widely different. An heir, in receiving the property, takes farewell of the proprietor. A son, in entering on his father's estate, loses that father's presence, and fellowship, and counsel. Not so with the believer when he enters heaven. He meets with the living Proprietor—with the living Testator—there. The bright inheritance is, verily, his own; and yet, it still is, and shall ever be, the property of Christ. The believer is not only "an heir of God," but "a joint heir with Christ," (Rom. viii. 17); and a living and reigning Saviour is one of the chief delights of his soul on earth, and one of the principal sources of his felicity in heaven.

While it may well be admitted that in the testamentary aspect of the Economy of Christ there is truth as well as tenderness, formidable objections may be raised

to the translation of the Greek word, in the present case, by the English word "testament." It must certainly bear the sense of *covenant*, or that of *constitution*, in chapt. viii. 6-11. This is required by the meaning of the Hebrew word employed in the text of Jeremiah, the quotation from which, occurring in that passage, gives the Greek word there used as an accurate translation (Berith). Moreover, in that passage of the Epistle, the same Greek word is applied to the Economy of Moses—which certainly could not be called a Testament. And still further, of the Christian constitution, as there represented, Christ is called a "Mediator." Now, if *covenant*, or *constitution*, be the meaning in that previous passage, surely it seems unnatural to understand by the same word, *testament*, in this. Indeed, here too, in ver. 15, the word is applied to the Old Economy as well as to the New, and of the latter Christ is called "the Mediator;" while, in ver. 20, the word formerly translated "covenant," but here "testament," is again applied to the Mosaic Constitution. If, then, the sense of, *testament*, is here to be received at all, it must certainly be restricted to ver. 16, 17. But even in these there is an obstacle to the admission of the meaning, *testament*. For, although the execution of a testament certainly depends on "the death of the testator," yet a testament may *exist*, and often *does exist*, long before the testator dies. But, in these verses, will the word admit of being rendered *covenant* or *constitution*? Some interpreters—including Michaelis, Tholuck, and Ebrard—consider it competent and suitable here, as in the previous and succeeding context, to stand by the sense of, *covenant*. According to this view, the phrase translated "after men are dead" (*ἐπὶ νεκροῖς*), is under-

stood to mean, *over dead animals*, and the expression rendered "the testator" (*ὁ διαδέμενος*), *the appointed victim*—so Macknight—*the ratifying sacrifice*—so Tholuck—or, *the covenant-maker*—so Ebrard. The last-mentioned of these three critics proceeds on the idea that, in the death of the victim, he by whom it was rendered virtually died himself; while all the three, and others who adopt the same general method of interpretation, agree in holding that there is a reference in the passage to the Hebrew custom of ratifying covenants by sacrificial blood. On the whole, the preference seems due to the interpretation which dispenses with the supposed transition from the sense of *covenant* to that of *testament*—although, in a philological point of view, that interpretation is not entirely free from difficulty.

Of the Christian constitution it is here said that Christ is Mediator. As Prophet, Priest, and King, He goes between God and man—representing man to God, and also representing God to man—constituting and maintaining peace and friendship between both. One particular part of his mediatorial work, and that a pre-eminently important part, is here specified:—"that by means of death." Considered as the Mediator of a covenant, Christ offered himself in bloody sacrifice, that the covenant might be confirmed. Considered as a Testator, Christ died—and so his testament takes effect.

The death of Christ is here represented as designed "for the redemption," or expiation, "of the transgressions which were under" the former constitution. But why is such a restricted reference assigned to that great and memorable event? In the Mosaic covenant the moral law is included; and certainly, sins in general are violations of that law. But still, the Jewish cove-

nant comprehended more than the moral law. The true reason, then, of the partial and limited form of the representation here given of the death of Christ is, probably, this—that the sacred writer was addressing a particular class, the Christian Hebrews—was addressing them at a particular time, the close of the Jewish Dispensation—and had a particular object in view, the exposition of the inadequacy of the Mosaic covenant and the manifestation of the close relation subsisting between that and the new and better covenant of which Christ is Mediator. That the death of Christ had a reference to all the sins of all the sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles, who, before their entrance on eternity, have believed, or do believe, or shall believe, upon his blessed name, is manifest from the Epistles of the New Testament, is indicated even in the predictions of the Old, and is exemplified in the annals of the Church and the history of the world.

It is a grand and glorious view which the sacred writer gives of Christ's death and mediatorship when he exhibits this as their object and design—"that they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

The "inheritance" is, future glory. Besides being essentially great and excellent, this inheritance is "eternal." Not only is it, as St. Peter speaks, "incorruptible and amaranthine," (1 Pet. i. 4), but they who once attain it shall never lose or forfeit it—it is given over to them for ever and for aye. Of this inheritance a "promise," or rather, a constellation of promises, has been vouchsafed. From the beginning of the world to the close of the Apostolic ministry, promise has been heaped on promise in reference to that glorious

heritage. God meant that believers should now “rejoice in hope of the” future “glory,” and that, in heaven itself, they should find fresh reason, in accomplished promises of celestial good, to trust in their Father’s faithfulness. And so, such promises are given.—To “receive the promise” may either mean, to get and embrace the pledge itself, or, to obtain the promised prize—to reach and enjoy the “eternal inheritance.” In both senses, the believer “receives the promise.” The latter, however, is probably that intended by the phrase. In this view, it resembles the expression “the promise of my Father,” (Luke xxiv. 49)—an expression which manifestly denotes the Spirit himself, the subject of promise to the Church.—But who are they who thus receive the promise? Who are they who, having the pledge itself to refresh and exhilarate their spirits here, have that pledge gloriously fulfilled in the experience of their bodies and their souls hereafter? “They who are called”—called by the outward invitation, but called also by the inward agency—called, not only by the Spirit’s spoken message or recorded oracles, but by his efficacious power and grace—so called as to “repent and believe the Gospel.” This is indeed a “high calling;” and precious is the “prize,” the portion, the “inheritance,” of which it constitutes poor sinful sons of Adam’s race the heirs, (Philip. iii. 14). And how, O how, have these inestimable privileges been provided and procured? By a great “redemption”—by a glorious Redeemer.

18. *Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.* 19. *For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people,*

20. *Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.* 21. *Moreover, he sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.* 22. *And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.*

This passage relates to the use of blood, the emblem of death, in connection with the Mosaic covenant. But, in ushering in his illustration of the subject, the sacred writer specifies the fact that Moses "spake every precept to all the people according to the law." A solemn warning this to those who omit the second "precept" of the Decalogue—refuse to allow "all" to study the word of God—or speak "according to" their own foolish fancies, or "according to" the wild and wicked traditions of erring men. A bright example, too, to the minister of God; albeit it is a pleasant thought, that blessed doctrines as well as sacred precepts—the articles of the glorious Gospel, as well as the commandments of the righteous Law—have been committed to his hands.

All the particulars here specified respecting the way in which Moses confirmed the Jewish covenant, are not expressly recorded in the narrative of his life contained in the Pentateuch. It by no means follows, however, that he, personally, did not perform whatever is here attributed to him. Still, what, properly speaking, was done by the priests, Moses is perhaps here said to have done—as being he who, as God's representative, required it to be performed.—"Blood" is exhibited, in this passage, in two relations. It was "shed" in sacrifice, in order to "remission;" and it was "sprinkled" on "the tabernacle," on "the vessels of the ministry," on "the book," on "the people," and

on many other objects pertaining to the Mosaic Economy. Meetyly, as is here suggested, did the shedding of the blood represent the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ—and the sprinkling of the blood and of the water by means of hyssop and scarlet wool, the necessity of having the atoning virtue, and the purifying grace, of Christ brought to bear on man, and on the ordinances which Heaven has established for his use.

23. *It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.*

Many of the objects of the Christian covenant are, literally, “in the heavens”—they exist, and are to be found, only in the better world. “Things in the heavens,” however, are just the objects denoted by the subsequent phrase “the heavenly things themselves;” and both expressions seem to be used to denote, comprehensively, persons and things pertaining to that covenant, whether in earth or in heaven. It is a covenant essentially celestial. The Christian Economy is called, “the kingdom of heaven,” (Matt. iii. 2, viii. 11, xi. 11, &c.) And believers still lingering in this low world are represented as “sitting in heavenly places,” (Eph. ii. 6).

“The patterns of” these “heavenly things” are obviously those objects pertaining to the Mosaic Economy of which an enumeration is given in ver. 1-5, 19-22. These represented “better things to come,” and have counterparts in the Economy of Christ. Thus, to “the book” corresponds the Gospel, and to “the people” the believing Church.

A statement is here made respecting each of these two classes of objects — “the patterns,” and “the

heavenly things themselves." "It was necessary that" the former should be consecrated with blood, and water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop. Such was God's appointment; and "his counsel shall stand." Such, too, was requisite in order to realize the typical character and design of the Old Economy. And so, when the New Economy was introduced, "it was necessary" that its objects should be consecrated "with better sacrifices than these." The necessity lay, as in other things, so in this—that it was the nobler counterpart, the destined and majestic realization, of the typical system which preceded it—and also in this, that, for the expiation of sin and the salvation of the soul, the blood of the Levitical sacrifices, and all the ceremonial of the Levitical law, were quite inadequate, and that, for these great and mighty ends, something far superior in dignity and value was required. The plural, "sacrifices," is probably here used in reference to the successive steps, or the several elements, of what, in one view, is but a single sacrifice for sin. The superiority specified is realized, in the case of Christ's offering, by the surpassing dignity of the victim, the surpassing severity of the sufferings, and the surpassing importance of the design.

24. *For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.*

"The holy places" into which "Christ is not entered" are the two compartments of the ancient Tabernacle or Temple, or perhaps rather, specifically, the Holy of holies. It is not into these that Messiah, in the exercise of his priesthood, is gone. Nay, in all probability, while He resided on the earth, He actually

never entered either into the Holy of holies or into the Sanctuary—the latter of which was accessible only to the priests, and the former only to the high-priest.

The “holy places” of the earthly house are represented as “made with hands.” They were constructed, indeed, according to a plan, or “pattern,” vouchsafed by God. But it was by human hands that they were reared, and they bore traces of the imperfection of the instruments that framed and fashioned them.

Yet they were “figures of the true.” The true Holy of holies is that lofty heaven into which our glorious High-priest passed when He bade the world farewell. In themselves and in their furniture, “the holy places made with hands” resembled, and even, by Divine appointment, symbolized it. But the celestial theatre of Christ’s sacerdotal work far, far exceeds, in excellence and grandeur, all earthly structures built by man.

It is into this glorious shrine that Christ is gone. Through the sanctuary He passed into the Holiest of all—penetrating the azure firmament, He entered the heaven of heavens. And why? “To appear,” it is said, “in the presence of God for” “them that come unto God by Him.” He is still employed in sacerdotal work. As the High Priest of the Church, He presents himself, on her behalf, before his Father’s face. Christ is literally, locally, in heaven; and there, in his person, He represents believers, and, in his vocal or silent supplications, pleads their cause. Theirs is a Saviour who died erewhile for their sins on earth, and who now intercedes for their souls in heaven—and a Saviour *He* whose blood is an accepted sacrifice, and whose prayers “the Father heareth always.”

25. *Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; 26. (For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world :) but now once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

The expression, "Nor yet that he should," requires certain words to be supplied from ver. 23. The meaning obviously is—Nor yet was it necessary that He should.

The proposition, "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world," taken in connection with the conclusion grounded upon it, "Nor yet was it necessary that he should offer himself often," implies that, before the advent of Christ, sins were really pardoned, and sinners actually saved. Sinful men were ransomed and renewed from the beginning—not, certainly, independently of Christ, but in prospective relation to what He was to do and suffer.

Although, however, sinners were to be saved from the beginning to the end, it was not necessary that the "great High-priest" should often offer—that the one Victim should often suffer. And why? That High-priest was God Incarnate—that Victim was "Emmanuel, God with us." And as for the application of his blood and righteousness, by the instrumentality of faith, to persons who lived before He came into the world—God provided for the production and maintenance of such faith in the human soul by prophetic oracles and ceremonial types.

From the relation in which Christ's one offering is here placed to the frequent entrance of the Hebrew high-priest "with blood of others," Unitarians have taken occasion to maintain, that it was when the former

entered into heaven that He offered himself, and that until then He did not enter on his priesthood. But (1.) Even supposing that Christ offered himself to God when He went to heaven, it does not follow that He performed no sacerdotal work when He died upon the cross; (2.) The very analogy traced, here and in other parts of the Epistle, between Christ and the Aaronic high-priest requires that, in the case of the former, the shedding of sacrificial blood should be taken into account; (3.) As Christ's presentation of himself in heaven is perpetual, with what show of reason could the sacred writer, on this Unitarian hypothesis, magnify the offering of Christ, as compared with that of the ancient high-priests, as being, unlike to theirs, not oftentimes, but only once, presented? (4.) An explanation of what is meant is given in that statement, ver. 26:—"Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

What a rich and comprehensive statement this! "Christ hath appeared"—"the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," (John i. 14). And why has the Incarnate Son of the Eternal Sire set his foot on the accursed soil of this apostate world? Not merely to teach man's erring mind, and to labour for his moral weal—but, "by the sacrifice of himself," to expiate sin, and secure the pardon and the purification of the sinner. Thus has He appeared "once," and only once—for not oftener did He need to come in order to offer sacrifice. And this one appearing has been "in the end of the world"—an expression the original of which (*ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ των αἰώνων*) Bengel understands, and with good reason, to represent the meeting of two great historic ages.

27. *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*; 28. *So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.*

Here, the sacred writer affirms something respecting men—affirms something respecting Christ—and points out a connection between the two cases.

I. He affirms something respecting men.

1. "It is appointed unto men once to die."

Angels do not die. They have no bodies from which the vital principle can pass away; and although Omnipotence, no doubt, could neutralize or abolish spirit, yet we know of no case in which this has been actually done, and spirit seems, by its very constitution, to have a life peculiar to itself. Besides, angels have never sinned; therefore they have not subjected themselves to any such penal process as death. But "men" must "die."—They have a constitution susceptible of death. Life and organized matter are two distinct things—the body and the soul are different essences—and if life be withdrawn from the matter, and the soul be severed from the body, man dies.—He is subject to influences which produce death. In a world like this, he is constantly exposed to accident. The very atmosphere he breathes is often charged with noxious elements. And in some frames the seeds of death are constitutionally sown.—Moreover, man is morally doomed to death. If he had never sinned, he would probably have never died. He might, indeed, though innocent, have been borne away to some other region of the universe; but it would not have been amidst the pains and agonies of death. In that case, the transition might have been made in some such way as that in which Enoch and

Elijah, in the continued possession of life, and with the body still linked in personal union to its sister-soul, passed to a sublimer world than this. But when our first father sinned, the sentence passed—"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," (Gen. iii. 19); and now, "in Adam all die," (1 Cor. xv. 22).

Men die "once"—only "once." When the vital principle has once left the corporeal frame, it shall never return to it before the predicted resurrection-day, so as to constitute it susceptible of a second death; and when that day has arrived, and life has revisited the lifeless dust, that life shall never be extinguished, and the soul which shall then resume its earthly tenement shall continue to inhabit it forever. Blessed reflection for the righteous! In Paradise, their souls, set free from mortal flesh, shall ever "live to God;" and in the "new heavens and new earth" where their embodied souls are to find a glorious home, "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain," (Rev. xxi. 4). Yet that word "once," so fraught with hope to the believer, suggests an awful fact in reference to the enemy of God. Once dead, he shall never pass, by death, from the world again. And why? Because his earthly and probationary life is for ever ended. "To-day," then, O sinner, "to-day, if thou wilt hear God's voice, harden not thy heart."

That "men" should "once die" is "appointed" by God. The general law of mortality is determined and administered by Heaven; and the death of every individual human being comes within the sphere of Divine Providence and Divine Decree. In this matter, Jehovah acts as a Moral Governor. Death is an ar-

rangement by which He sweeps impenitent sinners to destruction—by which, even while He takes his children home, He reminds them of the evil of that accursed thing from which they have been redeemed—and by which He admonishes the world that it has apostatized from Heaven. In fulfilment of his own righteous plan and of his own awful threatening, He “turneth man to destruction.”

2. “After” death is “the judgment.”

When men die, they are, in one sense, immediately judged by God; and the condition in which they leave the world must seal and determine their everlasting fate. This preliminary judgment need not be excluded from the reference of the present text. But what is specifically represented in Scripture as the judgment—namely, the ultimate assize, the final determination of the destinies of all mankind—is quite in harmony with the expression “after death,” and, at the same time, synchronizes with the corresponding fact, specified in ver. 28, that “Christ shall appear the second time.” That there will be a judgment after death has been held by a large proportion of thoughtful and serious-minded Pagans; and the doctrine is suggested by the dictates of the human conscience, and the perplexed and disproportionate condition of human affairs. But it is the testimony of Scripture that makes the occurrence of a future judgment absolutely sure; and that testimony, besides affirming the fact, explains its circumstances—teaching us, more especially, (1.) That Christ will be the Judge; (2.) That the doom will be determined by “the deeds done in the body;” and, (3.) That the sentences will assuredly take effect. (Matt. xxv. 31-46; Acts xvii. 31; Rom. ii. 1-16, xiv. 10; 2 Cor. v. 10.)

II. In these verses, something is affirmed respecting Christ.

1. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many."

He "was offered." The Eternal Son of God, "the Brightness of the Father's glory," the Second Person of the Trinity, having assumed a true and pure humanity, became a sacrifice. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him," (Isa. liii. 10); and yet, "He offered up himself," (Heb. vii. 27). In what character, and with what design? To "bear sins"—"to bear the sins of many."

This language denotes the vicarious, or substitutionary, nature of Christ's sacrifice. Men's sins were imputed to Christ; and, that sinners might escape the threatened punishment, He was punished in their place—that to *them* the awful penalty might be remitted, *He* paid it in their stead.

By the expression "to bear sins," the idea of a load or burden is expressed. And what a load was that which Jesus bore! what a burden that which He sustained! There were imputed to Him the innumerable multitude of sins chargeable on an innumerable multitude of sinners, yea, all the sins of all the sinners who escape from hell and rise to heaven. And the humiliation, the labours, and the agonies, of the Incarnate God declare how heavily the burden pressed on his anointed head. Marvel of marvels! Though He "knew no sin," He "was made sin" for sinners, (2 Cor. v. 21.) Though the Father's Well-beloved, He "was made a curse" for the Father's foes, (Gal. iii. 13).

"Straight is the gate," said Jesus, "and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it," (Matt. vii. 14); and, in every age, a large

proportion of the human inhabitants of earth seems hurrying to hell. But still, even in a single generation, the living saints may be described as “many”—since the fall of Adam until now, a vast succession of believing souls “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”—in the millennial age the world will be generally peopled by the friends and followers of Christ—and, at the consummation of all things, “a multitude which no man can number” shall “stand around the throne of God and of the Lamb.”

To “bear the sins of many” “Christ was offered *once*”—only once. Blessed thought to those that love Him! The sufferings of that Beloved One are forever past. Christ, once dead, shall die no more. Christ, once sacrificed, shall be sacrificed no more.—Glorious tribute to the value of his sacrifice and the dignity of his person! His “once offering” is enough. “By” that “one offering, He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” Thus He made full atonement for the mighty multitude of sins committed by a mighty multitude of sinners—sinners each of whom was sentenced to eternal death—sins each of which had incurred the hot displeasure of the heavenly King. And is He—can He be—no more than a human being like myself? Nay, the High Priest was “Emmanuel,” the Victim was Divine; and hence, the virtue of the one death, the validity of the one sacrifice. Christ-despising sinner, who art rejecting, day by day, that one sacrifice, it is vain, utterly vain, to expect another; and without sacrifice, without atonement, what, O what, must thy portion be! To Christ, then, to “Christ and Him crucified,” without the least reserve, and without an hour’s delay.

2. "To them that look for Christ shall He appear, the second time, without sin, unto salvation."

He "shall appear." He shall actually, overtly, visibly return to earth. There are, indeed, certain texts in which a great providential dispensation is called the coming of the Lord, and, in the 24th chapter of St. Matthew, Christ is represented as coming at the destruction of Jerusalem. But assuredly, his future advent involves more than such a dispensation, and will be a literal coming. In a multitude of plain didactic passages of the New Testament, it is affirmed that He will *come*. The two white-robed visitants who accosted the disciples at Christ's ascension said:—"This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as (οὕτως . . . ὁπρόσωπον) ye have seen him go into heaven," (Acts i. 11). In 1 Thess. iv. 16, it is affirmed:—"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout." The use of the phrase "the second time" in the present passage, also, shows that Christ's advent will be literal and real. Mere providential dispensations of Christ, considered as Mediatorial King, are passed by; and, his manifestation, as a Man in the midst of men, so many hundred years ago, being considered as his *first*, his manifestation at the end of the world is reckoned his *second*, appearing. It is in a highly-wrought passage, composed in the style of the Hebrew Prophets, that Christ represents himself as *coming* at the siege of Jerusalem; and probably that very passage has an ultimate reference to his advent at the day of universal doom. Christ, then, will really "appear." And assuredly, in respect both of physical and of moral magnificence, that expressive word, will, on the great occasion, be emphatically fulfilled. If, on

the Transfiguration-hill, "Christ's face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light," (Matt. xvii. 2); and if, when He appeared in vision to St. John, "his head and his hair were white as snow," "his eyes were as a flame of fire," "his feet were like unto fine brass," "his countenance was as the sun when he shineth in his strength," and "his voice was as the sound of many waters," (Rev. i. 14-16); surely when He comes to judge the world, it will be in glorious majesty. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God," (1 Thess. iv. 16). And O what a bright display will then be given of his wisdom and intelligence, his power and truth, his purity and justice, and his loving-kindness and tender-mercy too!

He "shall appear *the second time.*" And how different his second from his first appearing! The Babe of Bethlehem, the Wanderer of Judah, the Crucified One of Calvary, will be a triumphant King and Conqueror now. He "whose visage was marred more than any man's," will be radiant with heaven's resplendent majesty. He who wore the diadem of thorns will have "many crowns" of glory on his head. He who stood, a Panel, at the bar of Pontius, and was by him condemned to die a wicked malefactor's death, will, as the righteous Judge, pronounce the final sentences of all mankind.

He "shall appear *without sin.*" He was personally sinless when He at first appeared. But then He "bore the sins" of those for whom he died; so that, in one sense, it was not, by any means, "without sin" that He appeared. But, at the last, as with an absolutely sinless character, so without the burden of the imputed sin of other men, the Redeemer shall appear.

He "shall appear *unto salvation.*" Other sentences, indeed, than those which shall consign the faithful to eternal joy shall then be pronounced from "the judgment-seat of Christ," and another recompence shall then be dispensed than that of everlasting life. But the sacred writer is speaking of the "many" whose iniquities Christ shall have borne away, like the live-goat of the Expiation-day, into "the land of forgetfulness," and "who look for Him" as the Saviour and the Judge; and to *them* He will bring salvation. They were partially saved before this momentous time. But now, their salvation becomes complete. Their bodies are raised in triumph from the tomb. These bodies are strong, and fair, and utterly beyond the reach of that "king of terrors" who laid, evenwhile, their now resuscitated ashes in the dust. A glorious sentence bids them welcome to the "new heavens and earth." And thither they pass, "with the Lord at the head of them," to take possession, for eternity, of that bright and hospitable home.

Christ "shall appear" in these delightful characters, and for these blessed ends, "*to them that look for him.*" The description identifies a certain class—the friends and followers of Christ. True believers "look for" Him. They believe that He will come again. They realize that great and marvellous event. And they anticipate with hope the vision and the fellowship of their beloved Lord. To those who thus "look for Him," He will not only come, for He will come to *all*—He will not only appear, for "*every eye shall see Him*"—but He will come, He will appear, "unto salvation," and his appearing will be to them the visit of One who is very dear to *them*, even as *they* are far more intensely dear to *Him*.

III. A connection is here indicated between what is said respecting men and what is said respecting Christ.

The connection which is most distinctly expressed by the words "as" and "so" is one of analogy or resemblance. In this respect, the two particulars specified, in ver. 27, respecting men, correspond to the two particulars specified, in ver. 28, respecting Christ, and each of the two statements in the one case has its specific counterpart in the other. As "it is appointed unto men once to die," so "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;" and as "after death is the judgment," so "unto them that look for Christ shall He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." But the manner in which the two cases are here combined is fitted to suggest, if it does not absolutely express, another relation between them. The latter is, as it were, the antidote to the former. If men must all die, and, after death, be judged, O, surely, they need a sacrifice, they need a Saviour. Such a sacrifice has been offered up by Christ; such a Saviour Christ is, and, even at the future judgment, will prove himself to be. How happy they, though doomed to death, who, having "washed their robes" in his atoning blood, die "in hope of the glory of God," and who, when "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire," shall, in the sense of everlasting safety, bid Him welcome to the world! And for sinful, mortal men, about to "stand before the judgment-seat of Christ," to refuse, or to neglect, his propitiatory blood and his immortal friendship—O how foolish, how perilous, how fatal! Now, even now, to Christ, the Sacrifice and High-priest, let the sinner fly; and so, let him "find mercy of the Lord in the day" of doom.

CHAPTER X.

1. *For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect.*

The first statement of the present verse is this—that “the law had a shadow of good things to come.”

“The law” is obviously “the first covenant”—that Mosaic Constitution wherein God, requiring from Israel the performance of certain services, on the one hand, promised to bestow certain corresponding privileges, on the other.

The “good things” of which it “had a shadow” are, the facts of Christ’s mediatorial history—more especially, his lowly birth, his perfect character, his salutary doctrine, his miraculous works, his atoning death, his glorious resurrection, and his triumphant ascension—and also those characteristic privileges which, under his Mediatorial reign, his Church and people enjoy. These “good things” were still future—were still “to come”—until Messiah’s advent to the world.

Of these future good things “the law”—the Mosaic Constitution—“had a shadow.” A shadow is a faint and obscure, but faithful and comprehensive, outline and representation of a real body, thrown off from that body on the eye. This definition was realized by the Economy of Moses in reference to the Economy of Christ. It actually represented the objects of the better Dispensation. From its minute, varied, and comprehensive character, it served to do so with great accuracy and truth. Nevertheless, the representation was compara-

tively dark and faint—in many cases, failed to afford a right conception of the way of salvation, and, even at the best, conveyed but imperfectly the great idea. And finally, this representation, such as it was, was thrown off, as it were, from the real body, from the Economy of Christ—the latter was not fashioned after the model of the former, but the former was arranged in subordination to the latter.

“The law,” it is added, “had not the very image of the things.” The nature and drift of the argument, and that parallel text, Col. ii. 17, “Which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ,” may seem to indicate that by “the image” is here meant the essence, or actual constitution, of the future good things. But the word rendered “image” (εἰκόνα) cannot be properly rendered *essence*. It denotes, an exact and express image of an object—and must be so understood in the present case. In like manner, Cicero (*De Offic.* iii. 17) distinguishes between the shadow (‘umbra’) and the solid and express image (‘solida et expressa effigies’). The great realities themselves were needed for the salvation of sinful souls. But the law, although it had a retrospective reference to those who lived before the advent of Christ, did not even contain a complete and substantial representation of those realities, but only dimly foreshadowed them. Meetly, then, does the sacred writer draw the inference, and propound the doctrine, that “the law could never, with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect.”

The sacrifices of the law were not without their value. They appropriately ratified “the first covenant.” They set forth the need of bloodshed in order to expiation.

And they also typified "the Lamb of God." But they "could not make the worshippers perfect." They could not expiate human sin, in respect of the claims of the moral law, and the curse denounced by that law on all who had, in any instance, broken it. They could not adequately deliver man from sin, whether in its condemnation or its power. Even as means of presenting Christ to the human mind, they, in a large proportion of cases, failed to give men the conception of that glorious sacrifice; and, in those instances in which they *did* suggest the conception, it was comparatively dark and faint. But it is in reference to their essential virtue that the sacred writer speaks; and, in that respect, he says, they could not make adequate atonement for sin, nor efficiently save the sinner. He represents this as one element of weakness, or at least one evidence of inadequacy, in these sacrifices—that they were "offered year by year continually." And this idea is developed and applied in the two next verses.

2. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. 3. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. 4. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

The fact that, by the appointment of God, the sacrifices of the great Jewish Expiation-day were often repeated, and that on behalf of the same persons, obviously shows that one offering of these sacrifices was insufficient. The very repetition indicated an essential inadequacy, on the part of those sacrifices, to meet the great moral emergency. And it also proved that these

could not be the one great offering to which men were taught, under the Old, as under the New, Economy, to look for expiation of sin and acceptance with Heaven.

The reference to the remaining "conscience of sins" denotes, both the fact that the sinner was not effectually and permanently "purged" by the Levitical sacrifices, and the fact that, after the presentation of such sacrifices, the sense of guilt still held possession of the sinner's soul.

There is "a remembrance again made of sins" even by the true-hearted worshippers under the New Economy. At the close of every year, and many times in the course of it, believers are wont, and are required, to bethink themselves, in lowly penitence, of their own violations of their Father's law. The realizing "remembrance" of sins tends to foster that contrition which is an acceptable sacrifice to God, to promote that sense of weakness and danger which has so much to do with the attainment of strength and safety, and to endear that Saviour "in whom all fulness dwells" and from whom eternal salvation flows. But still, in respect of expiation or atonement, it is a characteristic, peculiar to other sacrifices than that of Christ, and not true of his in so far as those who obtain the virtue of his propitiation are concerned, that "there is a remembrance of sins made again" therein "every year;" and the fact that in the Jewish sacrifices this reiterated "remembrance is made" indicates their weakness and imperfection.

In ver. 4, the nature of the Levitical sacrifices is specified, and an argument grounded on it against their sufficiency. They were but brute animals; and hence it was "not possible that they should take away sins."

Not only had God never appointed these to serve the great and momentous end of making adequate atonement for human sin, but there would be an essential incongruity, nay, a moral inconsistency with the character of God and the sanctions of his law, in such mean and unworthy offerings being accepted as a compensation for the multitudinous sins committed by those "whose transgressions are forgiven, and to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity"—in such poor and paltry tributes to the offended justice and purity of Heaven sweeping away the curse of the broken law, and working out redemption for millions of souls on whom that righteous curse was resting.

5. *Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me :* 6. *In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure :* 7. *Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.* 8. *Above, when he said, Sacrifice, and offering, and burnt-offerings, and offering for sin, thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein ; (which are offered by the law ;)* 9. *Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.*

"All things must be fulfilled," said Jesus Christ himself, "that were written in the Psalms concerning me," (Luke xxiv. 44). There are two kinds of evidence by which a particular Psalm may be identified as Messianic. Something may occur in the Psalm which can only be applied to Christ. Or it may be affirmed in the New Testament that the Hebrew composition had a distinct and express reference to the great Deliverer of Gentile and of Jew. In the 40th Psalm—from which a quota-

tion is here made—as in many other Psalms, such as the 2d, the 16th, and the 110th—both kinds of evidence combine. On the one hand, the very fact of the speaker coming forward and professing to do, in the character of Jehovah's servant, what the sacrifices and offerings of the Jewish Law failed to realize, clearly points to Christ. And on the other, the authoritative writer of this Epistle expressly tells us that, in the passage which he quotes, Messiah speaks. There is only one verse in the Psalm itself which seems to interfere with this application. In that verse, the 12th, it is said, "Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me." Yet even that verse can be explained in perfect consistency with a Messianic reference. Not to insist on the fact that there may, in a Messianic Psalm, be a groundwork for the Christian reference in the merely human Psalmist's own experience; it is quite true that innumerable iniquities rested on the head of Christ—not, indeed, in respect of his own personal character and conduct, but by the imputation to Him of the sins of those whom He came to ransom—and that these imputed sins pressed very heavily on his pure and perfect soul. Though sinless, He was "made sin," (2 Cor. v. 21). He "his own self bare" men's "sins in his own body on the tree," (1 Pet. ii. 24).

The quotation here taken from the Psalm consists of four parts.

I. Messiah affirms that the sacrifices and offerings of the law were insufficient, and even represents the Father as having "no pleasure" in them.

Not only did the mission and sacrifice of Christ supersede and sweep away the sacrificial system of the law ; but even while that system remained in force, the sacrifices which it required were quite inadequate to the expiation of the sin of man, considered as the moral and responsible subject of the government of God. It is obviously this inadequacy that is here spoken of ; and this must be considered as meant even when it is affirmed respecting Christ, ver. 9, " He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second "—that is, In the quotation from the 40th Psalm, Messiah represents the Levitical sacrifices as invalid and insufficient, so as to prepare the way for the manifestation of his own sacrifice as adequate and efficacious.

II. Christ, " coming into the world," declares, addressing God, " A body hast thou prepared me."

These words are an explanation—corresponding to that of the Septuagint—of the declaration in the original Hebrew, " Thou hast digged mine ears." In the latter there seems a reference to the Jewish custom of boring a servant's ears with an awl as a sign and security for his performance of a servant's work, (Exod. xxi. 6) —although some suppose that it expresses the idea of obedience to Jehovah's will. To affirm, however, of Christ that He was constituted the Father's human servant, or that he consented to do the Father's work, implies that He was invested with a suitable corporeal constitution—that God " prepared for Him a body."

The very statement, " A body hast thou prepared me," as uttered by Christ, indicates that He existed before his incarnation—that He had a being ere ever He received a body. The preparation by God of a body for his Son, comprehends the mysterious and super-

natural conception of the latter in the womb of the virgin-mother, and the investiture of the body with which he came into the world with that immaculate moral purity, that fitness to be the seat of the indwelling Divinity, and that susceptibility to pain and death, on which the propitiatory virtue of his sacrifice depended.

III. Messiah adds, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God."

It seems to be on the hearty consent of Messiah to do the Father's will, rather than on any other particular, that, in the present argument and illustration, the sacred writer is disposed to lay stress. And hence, probably, it is, that in quoting from the Septuagint, he does not alter the somewhat free and paraphrastic rendering, "A body hast thou prepared me."

The "will" referred to, as appears from ver. 10, is the Divine choice and plan which contemplated the expiation of sin by the sacrifice of the Incarnate Son. Messiah's language is expressive of his hearty consent to accomplish that will, albeit at the cost of his own precious life-blood. The exclamatory word "Lo" serves to represent Christ's coming to do the Father's will as an extraordinary and momentous work. And O, what a marvellous manifestation of grace, and what a rich source of good to man, has the advent of Messiah proved! It was signalized, when it came to pass, by signs in earth and heaven. Foretold, in lofty oracles, by Hebrew seers; it has been disclosed, in the records of the New Testament, as fraught with "salvation manifold." Experienced on earth as the parent of human happiness and the foundation of human hope; it constitutes in heaven a subject of triumphant praise.

IV. Christ, at his coming, still further says, "In the volume of the book it is written of me."

When the Psalm was indited, the Pentateuch was probably almost the only portion of Canonical Scripture extant. When Christ "came into the world," however, the whole of the present Old Testament existed. This, then, may be understood by "the volume of the book." And truly, from Genesis to Malachi, there is a pervading prophetic reference to the advent, and mediatorial work, of Christ. Between the primeval promise that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head," and those bright prophecies of the rising of "the sun of righteousness" with which the Old Testament concludes, Messiah "coming to do the Father's will"—Christ in the dignity of his Divine nature, the perfection of his human character, the labours of his life, the bitterness of his death, the virtue of his sacrifice, the fulness of his merit, the grandeur of his throne, and the vastness of his kingdom—is explicitly and impressively foretold.

O how should we prize a Visitant to whom Jehovah, from age to age, has rendered such significant tributes of applause, and who, in the fulness of times, came forth so willingly on so generous, yet terrible, an errand! And how should we learn from his example, even in reference to enterprises painful and difficult, to say, "I come to do thy will, O God!"

10. *By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

Here the sacred writer, in the name of Christ's believing people, says, "We are sanctified." According to the analogy in which the word "sanctify" is used throughout this Epistle, it here means, *consecrate*—which, in-

deed, is the primary and proper sense of the Greek and Hebrew words rendered "sanctify." To all the members of the visible Church of Christ the word may, in this sense, be applied. But the higher consecration is peculiar to true believers. In *their* case, the attainment embraces three blessed privileges. (1.) They are freed from the curse of the violated law, and introduced into a state of peace and favour with Almighty God. (2.) They are delivered from the dominant influence of moral evil, and constituted "new creatures in Christ Jesus." (3.) They are set apart from the base and sinful fellowships of earth to friendly and familiar communion with "the Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity." In this comprehensive way are believers "sanctified." What a glorious thing to be able, honestly and truly, to take up the words, in this threefold reference, and say, "We are consecrated ones!" Believers may actually do so, and that without either pride or presumption. It is to the honour of Christ's sacrifice, for his ransomed and regenerate people thus, with humble modesty, to speak; and the believer, in recognizing his own spiritual consecration, may, and ought to, recognize that great experience as the product of his Father's grace and his Redeemer's death. Thus contemplated, it may move his heart to genial and pious sentiments—to penitence, and gratitude, and gladness.

Consecration is here traced to the will of God—that will which Jesus came to fulfil—that will of which, "when He came into the world," He said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." From all eternity, God chose and planned that certain persons should be sanctified. When He sent Christ into the world, He aimed at the realization of his own will respecting human sanctifica-

tion. And when, in effectual calling, He actually sanctifies men to himself, his omnipotent hand accomplishes the generous designs and wishes of his heart.

Human consecration is also attributed to "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ." On the ground of the propitiatory virtue of that sacrifice, men are justified. By the Spirit whom that sacrifice secures, and by the motives which that sacrifice, contemplated by faith, affords, they are purified, and prompted to a pious life. As reconciled by that sacrifice, Jehovah treats believers as his children; and they, in the confidence of its propitiatory virtue, may call Him Father.

"The body of Jesus Christ" is here spoken of as "offered once for all." How absurd, then, is the Unitarian idea that Christ's priesthood began when He entered heaven, and that his perpetual presentation of himself for men in that lofty world constitutes the whole of the sacerdotal work attributed to Him in the New Testament! And how monstrous the Popish dogma, that, in the Mass, Christ is to be often offered as a propitiatory sacrifice!

11. And every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: 12. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; 13. From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. 14. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified; 15. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 16. This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; 17.

And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.
 18. *Now, where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.*

Here, almost as if in recapitulation of what he has already more largely taught, the sacred writer contrasts the Levitical with the Christian Economy.

I. He describes the former.

He has previously referred to the fact that the high-priest often repeated the same sacrifice. He here applies a similar statement to "every priest," and thus excludes the idea that the high-priest was an exception. Of course, in specifying here, as in the previous context, the repetition of the sacrifice, he means to indicate the insufficiency of the offerings of the law. This insufficiency he positively states in the expression, "which can never take away sins." As God had never designed the Levitical sacrifices for moral expiation, so there was an essential inadequacy and unsuitableness in the blood of brute animals for making such expiation.

II. There follows a description of Christ, antithetical to the description of the law.

1. "This man offered one sacrifice for sins."

He resembled the priests of the Old Economy in the fact that He offered sacrifice—"sacrifice for sins." But He differed from them in not repeating his sacrifice. His sacrifice was "one." And yet, as throughout this Epistle is distinctly taught, that sacrifice was completely valid, gloriously sufficient. How? The Priest, the Victim—for they were identical—was Divine.

2. "This man," having offered his one sacrifice, "for ever sat down on the right hand of God."

Here, too, He resembles the ancient high-priest. The latter entered the Holy of holies; and in like manner, Jesus entered heaven. But not only in the persons,

but in the work and position, of the two there is a mighty difference. The high-priest of the Old Dispensation stood—Jesus “sat down.” The former stood, as a lowly servant, before the mercy-seat—the latter “sat down,” in dignified repose and authoritative rule, “at the right hand” of the Throne. The Jewish high-priest, after standing in the Most Holy Place for a little while, went out—Jesus “sat down *forever* at the right hand of God.” In entering heaven, the crucified Emmanuel obtained repose, and dignity, and power, which were not only vast but permanent—not only illustrious but perpetual.—“For ever” (*εἰς τὸ διηνεκές*), however, may be associated, either with “having offered,” or with “sat down”—and the antithetical connection is somewhat in favour of the former application.

3. Thenceforward, Christ “expected until his enemies should be made his footstool.”

What, in this respect, He anticipated has already been, in some degree, fulfilled. In the siege of Jerusalem, and the destruction and dispersion of the Jews on that terrible occasion, it was partly realized. The overthrow of commonwealths opposed to his government and law, the consignment of rebellious souls, at death, to a world of woe, and the triumph of avenging righteousness at the future day of doom, are all involved in the accomplishment. But is there no milder way in which the *enemies* may be made the *footstool* of that illustrious King? When the sinner, in humble penitence and confiding faith, brings all that he has and all that he is to Jesus,

“And lays them lowly at his blessed feet,”*

—O then he becomes, and in a good and glorious sense, the footstool of our conquering Lord. When “the

* Milton.

people are made willing in the day of" Messiah's "power," He "subdues the people under Him."

4. This exalted High-priest, "by one offering, hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

True, so long as they linger on this side of eternity, they are not morally perfect men. But Jesus has made a perfect atonement for their sins, and believers, in Him and his one sacrifice, are completely justified.

5. "Of this the Holy Ghost is a witness," in the description which that Spirit of inspiration gives, by the prophet Jeremiah, of the new and nobler covenant.

The import of the passage quoted from that Prophet has already been considered, in connection with chapt. viii. 8-12. In that passage, the new covenant is represented as comprehending sanctification as well as justification. These things must not be identified, as they are, in a great degree, by Romanists; but, both in conception and in personal attainment and experience, they must be combined. God requires, promises, and secures, the deliverance of the soul from the power of moral evil; and for that great object Christ is, throughout the New Testament, represented as having come into the world and offered up his life. Here, however, in connection with Messiah's sacrifice, expiation and acceptance with God are more especially referred to; and O how does the sacred writer magnify the virtue of that one offering when, after quoting the promise, "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more," he concludes his doctrinal discussion with the statement:—"Now, where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sins."

19. *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into*

the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20. By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh ; 21. And having an high priest over the house of God ; 22. Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

The more strictly doctrinal and explanatory portion of the Epistle is now concluded. Here commences a lengthened practical application.

“Brethren” was a familiar and favourite salutation among the Jews. As thus employed, it denoted their common descent from father Abraham, and their common participation in certain civil and ecclesiastical privileges. St. Paul uses it in addressing Christian Gentiles as well as Christian Jews ; and here, as elsewhere, it is to be understood as referring to the common relation of the followers of Christ to the religion and the Church of that common Lord.

“Therefore” associates the doctrines of the previous context with the practical rules of the present passage. But of those doctrines the sacred writer gives a summary, in the form of a recapitulation, in ver. 19-21.

I. The Christian Hebrews “had boldness to enter into the holiest.”

There is here a reference, more especially in the way of contrast, to what was realized under the law. None but the high-priest was allowed to enter the Holiest of all ; and *he*, probably, entered with trembling heart. But under the Gospel—as indeed, to some extent, under the Promise, before Messiah’s birth—all believers are to go to Jehovah in acts of religious worship. Moreover, when believers do so, confidence and hope are

blended in their hearts with reverence and awe. They are "the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty," and "have received, not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby" God's children "cry, Abba, Father," (Rom. viii. 15). The Spirit of the Lord has taken up his habitation in their souls; and "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," (2 Cor. iii. 17).

II. They have this "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."

In order to this delightful and desireable experience, it is necessary that there be something to serve as a ground on which God may receive sinners into favour, and bid them welcome to his throne. Such is "the blood"—the atoning sacrifice—of Christ. But in order to this boldness of access, it is also needed that there be something to act on the mind of the believing sinner—something to assure his heart in reference to "Him with whom he has to do." And such is "the blood of Jesus."

III. It is "by a new and living way, which Christ hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh," that believers "have boldness to enter into the holiest."

The way is called "new,"—not as if believing sinners had no admission to friendly intercourse with God in the time of the Jewish Dispensation, or were then independent of the blood of Christ and the principle of faith—but because, in the Christian age, a far larger provision has been made, and a far clearer manifestation has been given, of what is needed for an acceptable and comfortable approach to God. The epithet "living" represents the way as essentially excellent, and practically efficacious. As being not only provided, but also

sacrificially set apart, and prophetically blessed, by Christ, it is described as a "consecrated" way. And because his death in human nature was necessary in order to man's free and confident approach to God, and because, in like manner as the rending of the temple-veil at his crucifixion opened up the Most Holy Place, so the crucifixion itself, as a propitiatory and acceptable sacrifice, opened up heaven, for their approach by devotion here, and for their entrance by death hereafter; therefore the way is said to pass, and the believer is said to enter, "through the veil, that is to say, the flesh"—the humanity—of Christ.

IV. Christians "have an High-priest"—literally, a great priest (*ἱερεὺς μέγαν*)—"over the house of God."

For their welfare, as well as in accordance with their profession, Christ, having offered sacrifice erewhile, presents intercession now. The Priest whom they thus acknowledge, and who, on their behalf, once died on earth, and now lives and intercedes in heaven, is "great"—great in respect of his essential Deity, great in respect of his mediatorial calling, great in respect of his sacerdotal work, great in respect of his heavenly recompence. "The house of God" may denote, either, the idea of a temple; or, that of a family. Both ideas are realized in the believing Church of Christ. Christ is here represented as "over" that "house of God." He stands related to it as an authoritative Lawgiver, an infallible Guide, a majestic Guardian, a generous Comforter, and an illustrious King.

These four elements of doctrine—which constitute an epitome of what has been more copiously developed in the previous part of the Epistle—is now applied as an enforcement of certain corresponding duties.

I. The Christian Hebrews are instructed to “draw near.”

But to whom or what? Obviously, to the mercy-seat, that is, to God himself. What is here required is something far different from dead or dry formality. It is the devotion of the heart. It is the act, or rather, the habit, of realizing Jehovah, the proper and exclusive Object of worship, and dealing, directly and distinctly, with that good and glorious One in praise and prayer. Even before the advent of Christ, a Hebrew Psalmist could say:—“O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me, let them bring me to thy holy hill and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy,” (Psalm xliii. 3, 4). But under the Christian Economy there are special facilities for “drawing near.”

II. Christians are here called upon to do so “with a true heart.”

God “requireth truth in the inward parts,” (Psalm li. 16); and, as deceit and hypocrisy are “naked and open” to his eye, so they are hateful to his heart. Sound, Christian, acceptable worship must, from its very nature, be honest, genuine, true. “God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth,” (John iv. 24.) How, indeed, without truth in the heart, can a man approach Jehovah with confidence and comfort?

III. Another accompaniment of the act of “drawing near” must be “full assurance of faith.”

The “assurance of hope”—recommended to believers, chapt. vi. 11—is the decided and confident expectation and desire of what God has promised. The “assurance of faith”—recommended here—is the decided and con-

fidest persuasion of what God has said. The faith of which so much is made in Christianity has a special reference to Christ. Such a reference there obviously is in the present case; and when the Hebrew Christians are required to “draw nigh with full assurance of faith,” it is meant that, in approaching God, they should cherish and entertain a firm and unfaltering conviction of the dignity of Christ’s person, the virtue of his sacrifice, the splendour of his majesty, and the exuberance of his grace.

IV. Christians are still further required, in drawing nigh, to have their “hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.”

The heart here denotes the soul in general—that intellectual and moral nature of which “the conscience” is a part or characteristic. The conscience is “evil” when it is so obtuse, or blind, or perverted as to fail of faithfully distinguishing between right and wrong. It is also “evil” when it is wrung and tortured by remorse and fear. Now, the blood of Christ is fitted, both to render the conscience sound and susceptible, and to deliver it from the awful sense of unpardoned sin, and from the dread anticipation of future woe. In order to these ends, the conscience must be “sprinkled” with that blood. It must have the atonement of Christ applied to it by faith. The soul must recognize the virtue, and appropriate the power, of his blessed sacrifice.

V. The worshipper must have “his body washed with pure water.”

Baptism may certainly be meant. But then, this must be the accompaniment and faithful representative of moral purity. And indeed, it seems as if the sprinkling of the heart, and the washing of the body, were here intended to

denote, comprehensively, the sanctification of the complete nature—of the inner and the outer man. There is, probably, a reference to the washings prescribed in the Levitical law (Exod. xxix. 4, xl. 31, 32; Lev. xiv. 9, xvi. 4; &c.)—Stuart, Tholuck, and Ebrard, connect this last clause of ver. 22, not with the exhortation “Let us draw near,” but with the subsequent exhortation in ver. 23, “Let us hold fast.” In this way, a certain abruptness is avoided which would otherwise characterize the beginning of the latter verse.

23. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) 24. *And let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works:* 25. *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

When the sacred writer requires Christians to “hold fast the profession of faith,” he virtually requires them to hold fast faith itself. He surely could not ask them to profess a religion which they did not believe, nor to profess a faith which they did not hold. The consideration that “He is faithful who promised”—here proposed as a reason for holding fast the profession—is, if possible, still more a reason for holding fast the faith. On doing so, perseverance in the discharge of Christian duty, and in the enjoyment of Christian comfort, essentially depends. Of firmness in faith the Hebrews had a bright example in that great ancestor of whom St. Paul declares:—“He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief—but was strong in faith, giving glory to God,” (Rom. iv. 20). The apostle himself

could say:—"The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God," (Gal. ii. 20). And 'in this very Epistle is prescribed the rule:—"Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus," (chapt. xii. 1, 2). Still, the maintenance of profession, as well as the maintenance of faith, is wanted. The former is the natural, legitimate, and appropriate, result and expression of the latter; and by both, believers must seek to glorify their God, to edify the Church, and to arrest and illuminate the world.

There are two points of view in which the statement, "He is faithful that promised," may serve to enforce the command to which it is annexed. If the God who indited the Gospel, with all its rich and glorious promises, was absolutely true and faithful; surely the Hebrews were bound, giving credit to that Gospel, steadfastly to profess and maintain it. And if they had such faithful and unfailing promises to cheer and encourage them; well might they, in the face of death and danger, "hold fast their profession."

To be a "busy-body in other men's matters" is, in Scripture, denounced as wrong, (1 Pet. iv. 15). Gossiping interference with the affairs of a neighbour is alike undignified and unchristian. Nevertheless, the followers of Christ are here required to "consider one another"—that is, to feel an interest in one another's concerns, to observe one another's wants, and to seek one another's welfare. This they are required to do, in order that they may "provoke" one another "to love and to good works."

The Greek word for "provoke" denotes excitement (*παραξυσμὸν*); and the English word, in so far as its mere composition is concerned, simply means *call forth*.

It is obviously not in a bad sense—that of excessive irritation—that it is here employed. It is “to love and to good works” that Christians are to “provoke” one another.

The order of the two things is natural and significant. Love, in itself, is an amiable and important principle; but it is also a motive, and a powerful and appropriate one, to outward acts of useful effort. “Love” prompts to “good works;” and “good works,” as virtuous products, are the fruits of “love.”

The social genius of Christianity, the example of the apostles and primitive believers, and the express precepts of the Christian law, require the followers of Jesus to gather together oft for public worship, and to meet, as brethren in the Lord, for friendly conference about their common Saviour and their common faith. Both genuine Christians and mere professors of the Christian religion, however, have temptations, from within and from without, to fail of duly attending on such precious means of grace. Against such failure the Christian Hebrews are here solemnly admonished. And the caution—so appropriate for ancient members of the Church—is applicable to modern members too.

In the precept “exhorting one another,” the words “one another” are, very properly, printed as a supplement of the translators. But the contextual relation in which the phrase occurs makes it clear that it is of mutual exhortation that the sacred writer speaks. Connecting the counsel to “exhort one another” with the preceding caution about forsaking the social meetings of the Church, we may understand him as pointing to the twofold duty of exhorting one another to attend on these precious institutions, and of exhorting one

another, at such meetings, to the steady and faithful maintenance of Christian truth and practice of Christian duty. Alas! in the modern Church, what remissness there often is in this excellent social duty of mutual exhortation—a duty which has an important relation, both to the honour of the Christian cause, and to the edification of Christian men!

That duty is here enforced by the consideration, “ye see the day approaching.” To the Jews the day of Jerusalem’s overthrow was nigh at hand; and those of them whose eyes had been Divinely enlightened, perceived, by the multiplying omens, the approach of that awful and decisive day. To *us*, as to them, the day of “eternal judgment,” and—probably, nearer still by far—the day of death, is hastening on the wings of time. What a solemn call to use our present privileges well! What a strong and stringent motive for mutual exhortation, and for common adherence to the cause and covenant of Christ! Death, Judgment, and Eternity, are considerations which may well make men serious, watchful, earnest, active, and devoted.

26. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

The relation in which this awful warning stands to the counsel, ver. 23, “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering”—the resemblance traced, in ver. 28, 29, between the case here referred to and that of “him who despised Moses’ law”—and the analogy of chapt. vi. 4-6, show that what is here denounced is apostacy from Christianity. In one view, indeed,

true Christians can never apostatize from their blessed Saviour and their noble faith. Christ "gives unto his sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, nor is any able to pluck them from his Father's hand," (John x. 28, 29). But (1.) There are others than true Christians who have "known the truth," and even "tasted the powers of the world to come;" and (2.) One of the ways in which God keeps his believing people stedfast is to tell them what are the consequences of apostacy, and how it would fare with themselves if they should apostatize. The crime here denounced is set forth in three particulars. To do what is described would be (1.) To "sin," that is, to give one's self up to the practice of moral evil; (2.) To do so "wilfully," that is, by spontaneous choice and with determined resolution; (3.) Thus to act "after having received the knowledge of the truth"—after having understood the Gospel, apprehended its evidence, inwardly felt it, and outwardly professed it. And what—ah! what would be his corresponding doom?

"There remaineth for him," says the sacred writer, "no more sacrifice for sins."

After knowing the meaning and evidence of the doctrine respecting the sacrifice of Christ, the supposed apostate has systematically rejected that doctrine as an empty dream, or as "a cunningly devised fable." His rejection does not make it a whit less true that the Eternal and Incarnate Son of God was offered up in propitiatory sacrifice for sin. But while there is one such sacrifice, there is only one. The man who repudiates this can never find another. And when, after large personal knowledge and experience of Christian truth, he has come to trample it under foot, it is a

morally hopeless thing that he will ever embrace "Christ and Him crucified" as a Saviour and a Lord.

"There remaineth for him," adds the sacred writer, "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

It may be supposed that the Gospel is still urged on his acceptance; and were he, really and in right earnest, to accept of that Gospel by living faith, he would obtain salvation still. But he has determinately renounced the outward and inward means by which the Holy Spirit works when He effects conversion in a soul; and now, his case is hopeless.

The word here rendered "certain" ($\tau\iota\varsigma$) does not mean, *sure*, but merely represents the "fearful looking for of judgment" as of a particular kind. The apostate sometimes personally experiences the dread anticipation of future wretchedness and ruin. But even if his unbelieving spirit prove able to keep itself free from that oppressive burden, still, the tremendous prospect is before him—a horrid hell is ready to engulf him—an eternity for which he has no "good hope" stretches interminably out before him.

"Fiery indignation" is in the nominative, and not, like the previous phrase, "of judgment," thrown, by the expression, "a certain fearful looking for," into the genitive. Not only is there the prospect, but there is also a corresponding reality. Not only is there a dread omen of destruction, but that omen is ready to be realized in a "fiery" flood of indignation "from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." The intensity of anguish, and the extent of devastation, which it produces in the case of apostates and other enemies of goodness and of God, are denoted by the

epithet “fiery,” and the expression, “shall devour the adversaries.” O that the realizing faith of what these terrible words denote may serve to drive and draw the sinner from the margin of the dread reality!

28. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: 29. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? 30. For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

The apostate against whom is denounced so dark a doom is here described in three particulars.

I. He “has trodden under foot the Son of God.”

Christ is here denominated “the Son of God” in order to indicate the dignity and glory of that Mediator whom the apostate rejects, and the corresponding greatness of the guilt and danger of rejecting Him. He whose character is dishonoured, and whose religion is repudiated, by such an one, is God’s Eternal Son—“the Brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of his Person.” This illustrious One the apostate “has trodden under foot”—scorned and rejected as a vile impostor, or as a worthless visitant of earth. If the Person be so glorious and so good, and if the insult be so gross and so outrageous—O what a burden of guilt does the man incur, and what a deluge of indignation may he expect!

II. He has “counted the blood of the covenant a common (κοινὸν) thing.”

Of course, the "blood" is the blood of the atoning Sacrifice—the blood of the Mediatorial Son. By that blood the Christian Economy, with its sacred duties, its noble privileges, and its resplendent promises, is ratified and confirmed; and therefore it is called "the blood of the covenant." As flowing from such a victim, as presented by such a high-priest, and as establishing such a covenant, that blood must needs be honourable and precious. But the apostate has counted it a thing that has no sacredness at all—a thing without moral virtue or consecrating power. He has either repudiated it as the blood, righteously shed, of an impostor, or spurned it away as having no validity for the pardon of sin or the salvation of the soul. And yet, with that blood the sacred writer associates the idea, "wherewith he was sanctified"—that is, consecrated, or set apart to a sacred character and use. But whom does he refer to as thus consecrated by the blood of Jesus? Christ himself, some interpreters suppose. And certainly, as if in reference to his approaching sufferings, the Redeemer says, "For their sakes I sanctify myself," (John xvii. 19). But it seems to be rather *to* than *by* "blood," or death, that, in that statement, He represents himself as consecrated or set apart. It is decidedly more natural to apply the expression, "wherewith he was sanctified," to the apostate than to Christ, in the present text. Of course, however, neither justification nor regeneration is meant to be attributed to the man who really and permanently apostatizes from the Christian religion. No. He was never justified, he was never born again, he never became "a new creature in Christ Jesus." But he professed Christ's religion—he voluntarily and solemnly pledged himself

to Christ's cause; and, so, he was consecrated, or set apart to Heaven. Alas! alas! to what a wretched and portentous end has all this profession, has all this experience, come!

III. He has "done despite to the Spirit of grace."

Even with *him* the Holy Ghost, in the exercise of grace, had striven. In the case of those primarily referred to, even miraculous agency may have been witnessed and experienced. The Sacred Spirit had poured forth streams of sacred truth upon their ears; by signs and miracles, He had visibly confirmed the truth He taught; and, by his inward influence, He had caused the persons here described to apprehend its meaning, to perceive its evidence, and, in some degree, to feel its power. Notwithstanding, they had rejected it. In doing so, therefore, they had "done despite to the Spirit of grace"—they had despised, not man, but God—they had openly and systematically warred against the Holy Ghost. Strange object of hostility for man! O base ingratitude! O foul rebellion! O desperate strife!

The danger to which this class of persons expose themselves is here represented by a reference to what befell those "who despised Moses' law." The rejectors of that far inferior Economy "died without mercy." "Of how much sorer punishment," it is argued, "shall he be thought worthy" who, after knowing, feeling, and professing, the nobler system of Jesus Christ, repudiates that system, and, along with it, the Saviour, so gracious and so great, by whom it has been introduced! From the Old Testament, too, certain passages are quoted descriptive of Jehovah as One to whom vengeance appertains, and by whom the sentences of men will be pronounced, and the destinies of men will be determined.

These passages occur, Deut. xxxii. 35, 36 ; Psalm cxxxv. 14. It was frequently in reference to Israel's enemies that Divine denunciations were originally uttered. But if Israel rebelled and became like their Pagan foes, on *them* those threatenings rested ; and if the Hebrew Christians should apostatize, to *them* those curses should appertain. And what pungent force in the expression, " We know Him that hath said ! " He by whom the threatenings have been uttered, He by whom the curses have been denounced, is God—a Being, how wise, how strong, how pure, how righteous, and how true !

31. It is a *fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

By the title " the living God," Jehovah is contradistinguished from the idols of the Heathen, and is represented as possessed of a Divine Vitality. In certain cases, this name is meant to indicate his power to save—here, it rather expresses his power to smite and to destroy.

We are all, in one sense, in " the hands of the living God." " Whither," says the Psalmist, addressing that great and mighty One, " Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence ? If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there ; if I make my bed in hell, behold Thou are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me," (Psalm cxxxix. 7-10). In conversion, too, the sinner, in some sense, " falls into the hands " of God. The alien is restored—the rebel is welcomed back again—the prodigal returns to his Father's house, and sinks into his Father's arms.

Blessed attainment! Glorious privilege!—And yet, the sacred writer testifies, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Jehovah is here regarded as the God of vengeance. Man’s safety depends on being kept out of the hands of God, considered in that awful character. To fall into the hands of Jehovah as the unreconciled Thunderer, is certain ruin for the guilty soul of man. In that case, the righteous Governor fulfils upon the sinner the curses of the broken covenant of works. In that case, the dark and dreadful threatenings of his word upon the workers of iniquity are carried into execution. In that case, God meets men as an Enemy, and his wrath blazes out against them. Nor does the mercy with which Christianity is suffused interfere with the execution of the threatenings of Heaven upon those who finally reject the “great salvation.” The very greatness of that salvation, and the very “meekness and gentleness of Christ,” serve to aggravate their guilt, and to augment their punishment. “It is” indeed “a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” O, now let the sinner fall into his hands as the hands of God in Christ, bidding him welcome to their kind and sheltering embrace; lest, hereafter, he “fall into his hands” as the hands of an avenging Potentate—an unreconciled and desolating Foe.

32. *But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; 33. Partly, whilst ye were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. 34. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the*

spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

Here the sacred writer specifies certain things which had occurred, "in the former days," in the history and experience of the Christian Hebrews, and bids them call to mind those earlier times.

I. He specifies certain things which they had done and experienced in former days.

1. They were "illuminated."

God brought them within the sound of his "glorious Gospel." He disposed and enabled them to apprehend the meaning of Divine truth, and the evidence by which it was confirmed. And, in a large number of instances, He effectually taught them by his saving grace.

2. "After they were illuminated, they endured a great fight of afflictions."

Afflictions befell them—not only such as come on the sinful sons of men in general, but also such as are occasioned by the open and earnest profession of the Christian faith. These afflictions were a "great fight." They rushed on the Hebrew Christians like armed men; and they, on *their* part, were called to bear up against them—to resist their evil influence—to guard against being oppressed and overborne by the hostile force. And they, in very deed, "endured"—not only encountering the afflictions, but bearing them with fortitude, patience, and resignation.

3. These sufferings were realized—partly, in that they "were made a gazing-stock," literally, theaterized (θεατροζόμενοι), "both by reproaches and afflictions"—and partly, in that they "became companions of them that were so used."

There is no reason to suppose that any considerable

number of the Hebrew Christians here addressed had actually been exposed in the public theatre, and there consigned to the rage of wild beasts or some other torturing agency. But they had virtually suffered thus. They had been set forth, as criminals or fools, before the world. They had been to Jews and Gentiles objects of contumely and scorn. And they had been subjected to much positive distress in the injury done to their persons or their property.—Another source of their sufferings is here said to have been their partnership with persecuted Christians. Not only had they sympathized with these in their tribulations, but, as the friends and associates of the sufferers, they had found reflected on themselves the calumnious reproach and bitter scorn to which the others were subjected. O mad, misguided world! Its best friends, its noblest inhabitants, it hated and despised. What made men honourable—the friendship of the good, and the honest and earnest profession of the Faith—was turned to their reproach, and drew down the thunderbolts of earthly power and vengeance on their heads.

4. The Hebrew Christians “had compassion on” the writer “in his bonds.”

Esteeming the sufferer, and valuing the cause in which he suffered, they regarded his sufferings and himself with tender sympathy. In this they acted in the spirit of the religion they professed—a religion which teaches Christians to be “kindly affectioned one to another,” to “rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep,” and to “esteem” their pious ministers “very highly in love for their work’s sake,” (Rom. xii. 10, 15; 1 Thess. v. 13). In this, they resembled the Master they professed to serve—who is

“an High-priest that can be touched with the infirmities” of his followers on the earth, and, in some sense, “in all their afflictions is himself afflicted.” This pious sympathy probably brought the Hebrew Christians no ease or honour from the world. But it certainly awoke in the pious writer’s heart that practical gratitude which is so beautifully expressed in 2 Tim. i. 16-18 :—“The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day; and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.”

5. They “took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and enduring substance.”

One of the forms in which these early Christians suffered was the legal forfeiture, or the violent and unconstitutional loss, of property. A sad trial would this be to a worldly-minded man; and, considering man’s necessary dependence on temporal substance, it is a real trial to the saint himself. But these men did what the worldling but little understands. They “took joyfully the spoiling of their goods.” And what made them bear their loss so bravely? what made them sing for joy when their earthly possessions had passed away? They had “substance” in another world than this—a world which is but dream-land to the soul that wants the eye of faith, but is, in point of fact, a world of great and good reality, “where no thief approacheth neither moth corrupteth,” (Luke xii. 33). That “substance” was “better” than worldly wealth—essentially grander,

and also better fitted to enrich and gratify the soul. And it was “enduring”—as it could not go to wreck and ruin, so it could not be forfeited or lost by its possessors or its heirs. All this these early Christians “knew.” By the promises of God, by the sacrifice of Jesus, by the consciousness of faith, and by the inward influence of the quickening, enlightening, and sanctifying Spirit of the Lord, they were led to apprehend the fact and to entertain the confidence, that this great and eternal substance was their own—provided for them, and destined to be hereafter put into their full possession, by their generous Father’s grace. And so, as is here affirmed respecting them, they “took joyfully the spoiling of their goods.” Strange was the result; but mighty was the motive by which it was produced. And to like issues, even now, does the same motive in the regenerated spirit lead.

II. The sacred writer bids the Christian Hebrews “call to mind” those “former days” in which the things now specified occurred.

Man has been represented as ‘a being looking before and after.’ And rightly to realize both parts of the description is one of the things which Christianity requires. It often calls on men to look before—it here calls on them to look behind. And assuredly, from the past, as from the future, many solemn and salutary lessons may be drawn—lessons of humility, lessons of gratitude, lessons of warning, and lessons of encouragement. In the present appeal to the past history and experience of the Hebrew Christians, there is, probably, a special reference to the claims of consistency, in respect of the open and decided profession they had made—the claims of love, in respect

of the sweet enjoyments God had given them, and the rich inheritance He had provided for them—and the claims of confidence, in respect of the experience they had had of the truth and faithfulness of Christ.

35. *Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.*

By the connective word “therefore” the considerations presented in ver. 32-34 are here brought to bear, as enforcements, on the counsel, “Cast not away your confidence.” By the professions which the Christian Hebrews had made, by the grace which they had received, by the consolation which they had enjoyed, and by the hopes which they had entertained, they are entreated to fulfil this momentous duty.

The “confidence” (*παρρησία*) here spoken of is the bold and courageous spirit in which, according to the previous context, they had endured their trials, and maintained their cause. That confidence is, strictly, neither “the assurance of faith,” nor “the assurance of hope;” but it issues and flows from both. When the soul firmly believes the Gospel, and firmly hopes for heaven, then it is inspired with courage and heroic boldness in the discharge of duty and the endurance of affliction; and that is the “confidence” of the present text.

Still farther to enforce its maintenance, the sacred writer here declares that it “hath great recompence of reward.” That “recompence” is experienced, partly here, and partly hereafter. Divine complacency and peace and hope are included in the “reward” enjoyed on earth; and then come “glory, honour, and immortality,” in heaven. Both together constitute a glorious

“recompence;” a “reward,” indeed, “not of debt but of grace,” yet intimately associated with the duty done—with the “confidence” maintained, instead of being “cast away.”

36. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. 37. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

The word “For” indicates a certain connection between the 35th and the 36th verses; and that connection extends over the whole of the latter. “Patience” is derived from, if, indeed, it do not enter into, “confidence.” That believers should “not cast away their confidence” is part of that “will of God” which they are required to do. And “having great recompence of reward” corresponds to “receiving the promise.”

Three associated things are here presented and proposed to the Christian Hebrews.

I. They “had need of patience.”

“Patience” has relation both to duty and to trial. It is realized in the steady and vigorous performance of the one, and in the meek and courageous endurance of the other. In relation to both, the Hebrews had “need of it.” For (1.) Many of the duties to which they were called were arduous, and many of the trials which they had to encounter were severe; and (2.) Patience in both was an excellent grace—conformable to the law of God and to the example of Christ, fitted to support and dignify the Christians themselves, and calculated to recommend their religion and promote their cause.

II. They were called to “do the will of God.”

It is obviously the preceptive will of Heaven that is

here meant. That was a standard for the conduct of the Christian Hebrews, as it is also a standard for our own. And what a standard! It is absolutely sound — conformed as it is to the dictates of the infinitely wise and pure mind of the Eternal God. It is also eminently comprehensive — overtaking the complete range of human duty, in thought, feeling, speech, and action.

III. The prospect is set before the Hebrew Christians of a life of “patience” and obedience to “the will of God” being succeeded by the privilege of “receiving the promise.”

The pledge itself they had received already; and already had it shed its radiance on their path. But, as “hope” sometimes means, the object of hope, so “promise” sometimes means, the object promised. Such is obviously the signification here. The celestial glory is a promised thing. By promise the believer gets, in some degree, the enjoyment of it even here. And when, at last, he reaches it, it will prove the fulfilment of a hope which the promise had inspired, and a fresh assurance of the truth and faithfulness of God.

The 37th verse may certainly have a reference to Christ’s providential coming for the destruction of Jerusalem. But to all believers it will virtually be fulfilled. On this side of eternity, Christ is wont to dissipate the darkness, and disburthen the souls, of his believing people. And the day of death, and the day of resurrection, will bring them a bright vision of their Saviour, and a glorious deliverance from their ills.

38. Now, the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. 39.

But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition ; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

The statement "The just shall live by faith" occurs in Hab. ii. 4, and is quoted in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians. The just, or justified, man "lives by faith" because, (1.) Faith is the instrument of his justification ; (2.) "By faith" his "heart is purified ;" (3.) There are "joy and peace in believing."

With the life of faith are contrasted the apostacy of the professor and the corresponding curse of God. The two opposite cases are strikingly brought together in either verse. How wise to choose as the sacred writer, and his pious friends and companions, chose ! How desirable to be able, truly and honestly, to say, "We are of them that believe to the saving of the soul !"

CHAPTER XI.

1. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* 2. *For by it the elders obtained a good report.*

"Now," says the sacred writer, in the previous context, "the just shall live by faith"—and again, "We are of them that believe to the saving of the soul." He proceeds, accordingly, to show what faith actually is, and what that important principle can do. This he does, with much variety and beauty of illustration, in the present chapter.

It was by Messianic faith that the pious ancients of

the world were justified; and it is by a faith which recognizes and embraces Christ that men are now to be pardoned and accepted in the sight of God. But it is not exclusively of faith as directed towards Jesus Christ, that the sacred writer speaks in the present chapter. In certain of the instances specified—for example, that of the Israelites, ver. 29, and that of Rahab, ver. 31—no reference to the Messiah can be naturally traced in the description given; and to force in such a reference at every point, would be a violation of the laws of fair and simple exposition. It is of religious faith in a larger, or at least, more varied, reference that the sacred writer speaks. Of such faith he affirms, in the 1st verse:—“Faith is the substance”—or, as the original word (*ὑπόστασις*) may mean, *confidence*—“of things hoped for, the evidence”—or, according to another rendering of the Greek term (*ἐλεγχος*), *conviction*—“of things not seen.”

I. Faith is represented as “the subsistence,” or confidence, “of things hoped for.”

There are certain things which constitute the objects of hope. God, in his paternal mercy, has laid up in store a glorious aggregate of good which his believing people are not to attain until some future period of their history; and even in reference to time, for *them*, for the Church, and for the world, great and precious things are in reserve. These future objects are pledged by promises, and, by those promises, are presented to the mind. They thus become the objects of hope—that is, are anticipated with blended expectation and desire.

Now, these objects—looked forward to in hope—are spoken of as also contemplated by faith; and this prin-

ciple gives them, as it were, a "subsistence" in the soul. Faith so distinctly and vividly apprehends the objects as real and certain that, so to speak, it brings them near—constitutes them present to the mind. By faith, too, the soul sucks in the sweetness of the promises—"tastes and sees" the grandeur and value of the objects which those promises reveal. And still farther, faith, as a mother-grace, produces such results as constitute the earnest and first-fruits of the glorious harvest of future and eternal good.

II. Faith is represented as "the evidence," or conviction, "of things not seen."

"Things not seen," considered as objects of faith, are not, in all respects, identical with "things hoped for." Some unseen things contemplated by religious faith—such as hell—can scarcely be represented as objects of hope. Nor would it be metaphysically accurate to say that nothing which is seen can be the object of faith. Sight is, in certain cases, a ground of faith, that is, a reason for believing. But a very large proportion of the objects which come within the sphere of religious faith, are now invisible; and the fact that it discerns and embraces so many great and momentous objects "that are not seen," indicates its grandeur and its greatness. The invisible God, the invisible Christ, the invisible hell, the invisible heaven—these are among the objects on which it fixes its keen and open eye.

In ver. 2, it is affirmed that, by this principle of faith, "the elders"—that is, the pious ancestors of the Christian Hebrews, or, more specifically, the devout and dutiful ancients whose histories or names occur in the Old Testament—"obtained a good report"—that is, received a favourable testimony of their character or

conduct from God and from the good. This statement is associated with the definition and description given of faith in ver. 1 by the connective word "For." The idea, perhaps, is this—that it was, as being the practical and glorious thing which, in that verse, it is said to be, that faith secured for "the elders" "a good report." More probably, however, the connection depends on the emphatic character of the word translated "it" (*ταύτην*); which might be better rendered *this*, meaning, *such* faith as is described in ver. 1.

3. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

This example exhibits faith as "the conviction of things not seen," and illustrates the tendency to enlarge the views, and to dignify the action, of the human mind.

I. Certain facts are specified.

The Creation of the world, has, in every age, been the subject of interest and studious regard. Men's minds have been greatly divided on the subject. Even on natural principles, the simplest and most satisfactory theory which can be formed is this—that the world—that complicated, and yet harmonious, system, so richly fraught with traces of design—is the workmanship of one great and glorious Designer, God. What Reason thus approves the Bible expressly teaches. Many, various, and, in certain instances, eminently grand and beautiful, are the Scripture-descriptions of the Divine origination and arrangement of the world.

The plural form "the worlds" may seem to indicate that the sacred writer knew something of what modern science has disclosed with respect to a plurality of worlds.

This, however, it is not necessary to suppose. By "the worlds" he probably means "the heavens and the earth." Still, the analogy of the creation of this world by God, and the express testimonies of Scripture that God made the sun, moon, and stars, bear witness that by Him the plurality of worlds were framed.

In ancient, as in modern, times, there were wild theories afloat, to the effect, that there had been an eternal, and merely natural, succession in the productions and developments of the material world. It seems to be with a reference to such theories that it is said:—"so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

II. Respecting the facts thus specified, something is here affirmed:—"By faith" men "understand them."

Natural Reason, indeed, acting on the outward traces of design, recognizes the creation of the worlds by God. But the firm and decided assent and conviction which, on the ground of those evidences, the mind entertains of the creating and arranging agency of God, is an act or principle of faith. Moreover, many minds are led by conscience and a sort of mental necessity, rather than by the express recognition of the traces of design, to believe in God; and then, having embraced the two principles, that there is a God, and that the Bible comes from Him, believe, on the authority of that Bible, that "the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

It is not here said, however, that "by faith" men *believe*, but that "by faith they *understand*," this great fact. Faith communicates to the mind a clear intelligence, and ranges over an extensive and varied field, in the case of the creation of the worlds. It expands the views,

enlivens the conceptions, and elevates the soul, in relation to a grand and interesting series of primeval facts.

As faith looks backwards on the first creation, and beholds the Eternal Sire rearing and adorning the framework of existing worlds, so it looks forward to "the consummation of all things," and beholds Him fashioning and framing the "new heavens," and the "new earth," which Christ's ransomed Church anticipates.

4. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh.

Here commences a series of biographical examples of the power of religious faith. The case is that of Abel, the protomartyr of the world. The verse embraces five particulars.

I. Both Cain and Abel offered sacrifice.

"Spiritual sacrifices" were presented to God in the days of innocence. The humility of a creature conscious of dependence upon God, the gratitude of a creature mindful of God's tender-mercies, and the aspirations of a creature seeking God's paternal love and care, enter into the very essence of personal religion, and must have been rendered, by Adam and Eve, ere ever Paradise was lost. Perhaps, too, even then and there, they offered some formal sacrifice to Heaven—such as, the loveliest of the flowers, or the richest of the fruits.

But the annals of formal, or, at least, of bloody sacrifice commence with the Fall. Some have supposed that the animals with the skins of which Jehovah clothed our first parents were those of animals offered up in sacrifice. The conjecture is ingenious, but cannot be substantiated

as true. Here, however, in the case of Cain and Abel, we at length meet with decided instances of formal sacrifice. "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord; and Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof," (Gen. iv. 3, 4). Very diverse in character were the two brothers; but, as they probably, amidst all their difference of form and feature, bore a family-likeness to each other, and in early life, though in a different tone and with a different temper, pursued the same studies and sought the same amusements, so now, they both present themselves, with offerings, before the Lord. But how did a man like Cain present an offering to the Lord at all? He may have done so in hypocrisy—in order to secure credit and approbation from his pious brother, and from his, probably, now repentant and pious parents. Or he may have done so as a formalist—recognizing, indeed, the being of a God, and his own dependence on that superior Power, but seeking to propitiate Him, or, at least, professing to honour Him, by empty, lifeless services. Both varieties are to be met with in the world.

II. "Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain."

Amidst all the resemblance, how great the difference between the two! Born of the same parents, nurtured on the same knees, trained in the same home, and even worshipping before the same eternal Throne, still, "far as the east is from the west," so far was the offering of Abel from the offering of Cain in character and kind. (1.) Viewed even in respect of the intrinsic value of the two sacrifices—the one that of "the fruit of the earth," the other that of "firstlings and the fat thereof"

—the latter probably excelled the former. (2.) That of Abel was a bloody sacrifice—as is indicated by the expression “the fat thereof,” and by the fact that animals could only be given up to God by death—and may therefore be regarded as representative of a sense of sin, and prefigurative of the sacrificed “Lamb of God,” and, in both respects, unlike to the offering of Cain. (3.) Abel offered his sacrifice under the pious promptings of a regenerated heart; whereas it was as a hypocrite, or as a formalist, without Messianic faith, and probably without even intense humility or lively gratitude, that Cain presented his.

III. Abel “offered” his “more excellent sacrifice” *“by faith.”*

It is probable that faith—specifically Messianic faith—led him to select the particular sacrifice he rendered—a sacrifice, not only essentially valuable and costly, but also involving bloodshed and expressive of atonement. Faith, too, produced in his heart the humility, reverence, gratitude, confidence, and hope, in the exercise of which he offered up his sacrifice.

IV. By this sacrifice—for “sacrifice” rather than “faith” seems to be the antecedent to “which”—Abel “obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.”

“Righteous” here denotes a state of justification; as appears from that expression applied to Noah, ver. 7:—“became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” Abel, then, was a justified man; and that he was so, he “obtained witness” by his sacrifice. The nature of the sacrifice is fitted to suggest, that he was possessed of Messianic faith—of that faith by which, before the advent of Christ, the sinner was justified—of that faith

by which, though in a new historical relation, and with greater definiteness of view, the sinner is *now* acquitted and received as righteous in the sight of Heaven. But God himself has testified to Abel's righteousness. To Abel and his family Jehovah may have done so by some oracular voice or sign expressly declaring the former justified. At any rate, He virtually did so by the tribute which He bore to the value, and the acknowledgment which He made of the acceptance, of Abel's sacrifice. God "testified of Abel's gifts;" and "in the volume of the book" He still testifies, both of him, and of his sacrifice. Happy martyr!—his person justified, his gifts and services accepted, his spirit early taken home to God!

V. It is added:—"and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh."

The antecedent to "it" seems to be rather "faith," than "sacrifice." But certainly, by his sacrifice, as well as by his faith, Abel still "speaketh" to the Church and to the world.

On Abel's death, Jehovah thus addressed the murderer:—"The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground," (Gen. iv. 10). And it has been supposed that this cry for vengeance in the ear of Heaven is all that is denoted by the statement, "He, being dead, yet speaketh." But (1.) How natural soever it might be to speak of Abel's blood crying for vengeance at the very time of the murder, and ere ever the thunderbolt had descended on Cain's guilty head, it is quite the opposite to speak in the same way of that blood thousands of years after God's avenging justice had hurled its weapons against the wretched "fugitive and vagabond;" (2.) How could Abel's blood be said to

cry to God for vengeance by his sacrifice or by his faith? and (3.) It is not said, in the present passage, that Abel's blood, but that Abel himself, "speaketh." It is in a different sense, then, that this figurative statement must be understood. Abel's living voice is silent; but, though dead and in his grave, he speaks by the record of his faith and of his sacrifice. What faith is, what faith can do, and what faith secures, are among the lessons which the mute sleeper in the dust discourses, with arresting and expressive eloquence, to living men. O that from martyred Abel they may come "with power and demonstration of the Spirit" to our souls! And O that when *we* are mute, the memory of our characters and lives may teach like lessons to surviving friends!

5. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. 6. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

The record given in Genesis of Enoch's character and departure from the world is brief and sententious, but comprehensive and expressive:—"Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him," (Gen. v. 24).

The words "he was not," taken by themselves, are dark and doleful. They might seem like a death-knell ringing an honoured and excellent inhabitant of earth into nonentity. But there is hope, nay, sweet assurance, in the succeeding words, "God took him." The two

ideas are combined in the statement, "Enoch was translated." That pious patriarch passed from one world to another. He abandoned earth; but he entered heaven. He parted with mortal men; but he soared aloft to the ever-living God—"God took him." Blessed transition! Glorious change!

It is here affirmed, still farther, that, when Enoch was "translated," he did "not see death." That he did not die could scarcely be legitimately gathered from the record, "he was not, for God took him," peculiar and striking though that record be. The present testimony, however, is explicit and express. Like Elijah afterwards—and probably in some similar mode—Enoch left the world without undergoing the process of death. So, perhaps, should the successive generations of mankind, had unbroken and unsullied innocence remained, have soared to a sublimer region of the universe of God. So, at "the consummation of all things," shall the reunited souls and bodies of believers pass to the "new heavens and earth, in which righteousness shall dwell." How different, and yet how similar, the transition of the ransomed and regenerate soul, at death, to Paradise! A pleasant land—a garden of delights—but entered by a portal dark and drear!

Enoch's "translation that he should not see death" is here attributed to faith. By faith he was justified from sin. By faith he was made ready for a better world. Thus accepted, and thus prepared, he was wafted into heaven by God, and that without undergoing the dread reality of death; and so, Jehovah testified the power and preciousness of the faith which animated his servant's soul.

Enoch, when translated, "was not found." Men

sought for Elijah after his translation ; but they did not find him—he was far away. So, perhaps, men sought for departed Enoch ; but in vain—God had taken him,—and who could find him ? who ? Even after the death of a cherished friend, a survivor—the very survivor, it may be, who has closed his dying eyes—may, in some sense, seek him ; if good tidings reach him, may hurry in quest of the friend—alas ! no more—whose ear would have gladly welcomed them ; or if sickness or suffering befall, may go to seek the dead and buried one in search of sympathy. But find him he cannot—no, not though, as Dr. Beattie is recorded to have done in the case of a dear departed son, he should go from chamber to chamber, and from haunt to haunt, and call on him by his well-known, long-remembered, name. So was it in the case of Enoch. Heaven had gained him—no worthless gain ! but earth had lost him—no common loss ! and he “ was not found, because God had translated him.”—“ Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men,” (Psalm xii. 1).

Enoch's translation without seeing death is here attributed to faith. His faith, indeed, was neither the purchase-price, nor the efficient cause, of his triumphant entrance into heaven. But by the instrumentality of faith he entered into that peace with God without which this glorious consummation could not have been attained, and by the influence of faith he was moulded into that character without which he could never have been fit for the purer and sublimer world. It has been supposed that Enoch, like Elijah, had received a previous intimation from God that he was to be translated, by a deathless exit, from the world, and that the faith of that announcement is here specifically meant. But of

such an announcement nothing is said in the Mosaic record of Enoch's life, nor is there anything in the present text from which the occurrence of any such announcement can be legitimately drawn. Moreover, the remainder of the verse is obviously meant as an explanation of the faith by which Enoch was translated, and of the way in which it led to this majestic issue.

It is quite conceivable that Enoch, in his life-time, received some express and satisfactory testimony that God was pleased with him. But by what is said at the close of the 5th verse, it may be meant to suggest that statement in the Mosaic record—"Enoch walked with God." The original text (*πρὸ γὰρ τῆς μεταθέσεως μεμαρτύρηται εὐαρεστηκέναι τῷ Θεῷ*) will certainly bear the sense—for it has been testified that, before his translation, he pleased God. And no wonder that, in illustration of Enoch's faith, and piety, and triumph, the declaration that he "walked with God" should be referred to. Noble testimony! blessed distinction! Enoch lived in the midst of godless men; and in his prophecy, quoted by St. Jude, ungodliness is a paramount idea:—"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are *ungodly* among them of all their *ungodly* deeds which they have *ungodly* committed, and of all their hard speeches which *ungodly* sinners have spoken against Him," (Jude 14, 15). But Enoch himself was godly, eminently godly:—"he walked with God." The statement implies, that he was at peace with God—for "can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos iii. 3). It intimates, that he realized the presence and character of God, that he held communion with that

glorious One, and that he walked in the way of the Divine commandments. Such being the condition, and such the character, of Enoch; of course, imperfect though he was, he must have "pleased God"—Jehovah must have regarded him with complacency and love.

In ver. 6, on the ground of a very simple, and generally acknowledged, principle, the fact of pleasing God as Enoch did is traced to faith. (1.) A certain character and relation are specified in the expression, "he that cometh to God"—an expression realized when the disinherited child, the banished rebel, is restored to the favour of his Sovereign and Sire—when the alien from God's fear and service devotes himself, body, soul, and spirit, to the fulfilment of the precepts, and the maintenance of the cause, of Heaven—and when the reconciled child, the dutiful servant, engages in fellowship with his affectionate Father and generous Lord. (2.) "Pleasing God" is identified, or intimately associated, with "coming to God;" and assuredly, every one who comes to Him in all, in any, of the ways now specified, pleases Him, and none but they who in one, in all, of these methods come to Him *can* please Him. (3.) It is maintained that, in order to thus coming to God, and therefore in order to thus pleasing Him, it is necessary to believe "that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him"—a description, in the former part of which the existence of the true God, of such a God as Revelation discloses, must be meant, and in the latter part of which, "them that diligently seek Him" must denote decidedly religious men, and the reward specified must be a recompence, not of debt, but of grace.

Ours be a like faith as that of Enoch—yea, clearer

and more comprehensive, as, in these Christian times, it becomes man's faith to be. Willing wanderer from thy Father's house, wretched outcast from thy Father's arms, come, O come to Him who "waiteth to be gracious," and beckons thee to pardon and to peace—come by Christ, "the way, the truth, the life," and make *his* everlasting Father *thine*. Alien from the fear and service of the Heavenly Monarch, come—renounce his rivals, and, confessing thy hostile opposition in the past, devote thyself, for the boundless future, to his honour and his cause. Friend and follower of that glorious King, in constant acts of pious fellowship and dutiful obedience come—and, lamenting over thy past remissness in both respects, exclaim,

"O for a closer walk with God!"*

"Enoch walked with God," and tens of thousands have done so since—let us copy their example, let us emulate their course. To live as ever in Jehovah's eye—to trace Him everywhere, and realize Him alway—to treat Him as the supreme Authority, and make Him the supreme Delight—to seek his counsel, and hearken to his voice—to behold his glory in the exercise of believing thought—to receive his oracles as "true and faithful sayings"—to make his promises the ground of the heart's firm trust—and to use as the standard of conduct, not what men practise, but what *He* prescribes—this, this is to "walk with God"—this, this is the life which the authority of Heaven demands, and which the constitution and destiny of man require. He that, like Enoch, thus lives, like Enoch "pleases God." His conduct and experience show that the Universal Ruler

* Cowper.

is his reconciled Father; and on both the eye of his Omniscience rests complacently. True, even he "who walks with God" must die. No mighty whirlwind nor fiery chariot is likely to bear his still embodied soul to heaven. But death will not sever his relation to his Father, nor terminate his walk with God. Jehovah may be met with in pleasant communion, here; but his throne is elsewhere, and thither, at its departure hence, the soul of his ransomed and regenerate one shall go. To "walk with God," in faithful service and friendly fellowship—that, in a higher sense, and in a more intense degree, than is attained in this low world, is the bliss of Paradise. And the body shall at length emerge from its bed of dust, and, linked forever with its sister-soul, shall have its share, not, indeed, amidst the bowers of that primeval Eden where our still un-fallen father held high fellowship with Heaven, but amidst the glories of a lovelier and sublimer "garden of delights," in an uninterrupted and eternal "walk with God."

7. *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*

"The world," as Bishop Hall says, (*Contemplat.*) "was grown so foul with sin, that God saw it was time to wash it with a flood." As men grew in number, wickedness increased. Even those of whom better things might have been expected—men who are called by Moses "the sons of God," and who probably were descendants of Seth—were led, by carnal desire, into matrimonial connections interdicted and unsafe. True

religion declined, and gross corruption triumphed. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," (Gen. vi. 5). He waited long—at length He interposed, to vindicate his honour, and denounce his enemies. But Noah, 'faithful among the faithless,' was treated by the avenging Ruler as a friend. The very name which his father had given him—*Noah*, meaning, Rest—was ominous of good. Great things are said of him in Scripture. Moses declares, not only that "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord," but also, that he "was a just man, and perfect in his generation," and that he "walked with God," (Gen. vi. 8, 9). In the Book of Ezekiel (chapt. xiv. 14), his name is associated, as one of pre-eminent moral distinction, with those of Daniel and Job. In 2 Pet. ii. 5, he is called "a preacher of righteousness." And in the present verse of the Epistle to the Hebrews, he is represented as one adorned by an honourable character, devoted to a high vocation, and preserved by a great deliverance.

I. He was "warned by God of things not seen as yet."

In the expression "things not seen as yet," there is probably a reference to the description of faith given in ver. 1. The things meant are the waters of the flood and the devastation of the world. When God instructed Noah to build the ark, these horrors were still unseen. But though as yet invisible, they were sure—though still future, in the revolution of a few fleeting years they came. The flood of wickedness introduced the flood of waters. Sins "reaching up to heaven" drew desolating torrents thence. The soil which groaned beneath the corruption and the crimes of men poured forth its

hidden streams; which, mingling with the descending floods, overflowed the loftiest hills, and swept the godless multitude away. They were "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage," (Matt. xxiv. 38). While the heavens were blue and the air was calm, they feared not future ill. The sermons of Noah, and his ominous erection of the ark, were the objects of ridicule or neglect. But when men were merry, and wickedness was bold, the judgment, the devastating judgment, came. Climbed they the tallest trees, or ascended to the summits of the loftiest hills? The surging waters climbed those trees, ascended to these mountain-tops, along with them. But the ark—found not the scoffers refuge there? Too late!—alas! too late! The door was shut—and hope was lost—and in vain *he* fled whom God's Omnipotence pursued. The "things" erewhile "not seen," and therefore by the godless multitude not looked for, now were come—the earth was overflowed, and that guilty multitude was gone.

Of these things, while "as yet not seen," Noah was "warned of God." The warning referred to is recorded, Gen. vi. 13-16; in which passage, two things are comprehended:—(1.) A declaration of the impending judgment; (2.) A corresponding directory with respect to the construction of an ark. In mercy to Noah, in mercy also to the world, was the warning given. To the latter, was still afforded time for repentance; and in what the former was not only qualified to say, but also required to do, they were summoned, throughout another century of years, to fly for refuge to the bosom of their angry, but still compassionating, God.

II. Noah, thus "warned of things not seen as yet," was "moved with fear" (εὐλαβηθεὶς).

There is a kind of fear which God approves not in his children—there is a stormy terror worthier of a slave than of a child. It must be of a fear commendable and appropriate on the part of Noah that the sacred writer speaks. A reverential fear of the God who warned him, and of the judgments which that pure and righteous Ruler of the world had spoken of, occupied the mind, and, as the passage indicates, prompted and sustained the active efforts, of that pious father of the world. This “godly fear” had reference, no doubt, (1.) To God, considered as the sin-hating, sin-avenging Majesty, “clothed with” moral “light as with a garment,” and, while infinitely wise to plan, also infinitely strong to punish; (2.) To himself and his family, as summoned to an arduous enterprise, and about to witness an awful tragedy; (3.) To the world—that guilty, godless world on which such horrors were about to fall. Similar examples of the fear referred to are presented in Psalm cxix. 120; Hab. iii. 16; Mal. ii. 5; and such fear is inculcated in this Epistle, chapt. xii. 28, 29.

III. Noah, thus “warned of God” and “moved with fear,” “prepared an ark to the saving of his house.”

To the Divine warning this pious ancient gave practical heed; and the sacred fear which it inspired inclined him to do what the oracular call prescribed. He “prepared an ark;” and, by the preparation of the ark, *his house was saved*, his family were preserved, when the devastating deluge came.

He “prepared an ark.” “Make thee an ark,” said God, and, in meek submission to his will, Noah went and built one. The dimensions, the materials, and the arrangements, of the fabric, Jehovah condescended to prescribe; and, in reference to these, the sacred historian

says, Gen. vi. 22 :—“ Thus did Noah ; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.” The work was vast ; but Noah undertook, continued, and completed it. The scoffers who despised his preaching, probably also ridiculed his work ; but, in spite of all, he persevered— and in the issue, who proved to have been the fool ? he, or the men who laughed at him ? Alas ! his admonitions were rejected and despised ; but still, by what he did, as well as by what he said, while he obeyed God, he also warned the world. The warning was unavailing, in so far as the scoffers were concerned ; but by the preparation of the ark, Noah and “ his house ” were saved. There was no refuge in the shadows of the woods, or in the covert of the caves, or on the summits of the hills. But the ark—the Divinely-prescribed and Divinely-fashioned ark—that was a refuge for the men who entered it. Within its wooden walls, with animals fierce as well as tame beside them, and with the surging, and still increasing, waters round them, they were safe. “ Come thou,” said the Lord to Noah, “ Come thou and all thy house into the ark.” They entered ; “ the Lord shut them in ;” and in their Divinely-steered, Divinely-guarded, cabin, they rode the waters in which others found their cold and cheerless sepulchre—until, behold ! those “ waters are assuaged,” and, like the dove which, erewhile returning to the ark with “ an olive-branch plucked off,” at length, having found a greener and more favourite home, comes back no more, the family preserved of God go forth and tread the soil of the old, but now renovated, earth.

IV. *By faith* Noah, “ moved with fear, prepared the ark to the saving of his house.”

He built the ark because he believed God. God had

told him there was danger; and therefore he believed there was. God had told him that destruction would befall; and therefore he believed it would. God had told him that he and his family might be saved by the preparation of an ark; and therefore, he believed they might. Believing these things, he acted in accordance with them—persuaded of them, he yielded to their influence—“by faith, he prepared an ark to the saving of his house.” “Methinks,” says Bishop Hall, (*Contemplat.*) “I see those monstrous sons of Lamech coming to Noah, and asking him what he means by that strange work? whether he means to sail upon the dry land? To whom when he reports God’s purpose and his, they go away laughing at his idleness, and tell one another in sport, that too much piety hath made him mad:—yet cannot they all flout Noah out of his faith—he preaches, and builds, and finishes.” Yes, he kept sight of the threat, the promise, and the commandment of his God; and “Thus saith the Lord” was the ground of his confidence and the warrant of his work. Nature—unconsecrated Reason—might have suggested that surely, under the government of the kind Creator of the world, its inhabitants would not—at least, thus early in its history—be destroyed, and that, if they should, and that by a universal flood of waters, such a wooden ark as man might build would be unable to protect its inmates. But, hearkening to God’s voice, receiving God’s oracle as true and faithful, Noah, in fear, and yet in hope, “prepared the ark;” nor was his work in vain—it was “to the saving of his house.”

V. By his faith, which thus acted and showed itself in the construction of the ark, Noah “condemned the

world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

He "condemned the world." In his sermons, and by his preparations, he rebuked the wickedness of men, and vindicated the threatenings and punishments of God. His character, his words, his works "rose up in judgment against that generation, and condemned it," in that it was not thereby led to repentance. In the face of what the "preacher of righteousness" had said and done, the inhabitants of the earth had no pretence for saying that they had not been admonished of their sin and danger. And when the judgments actually came, Noah acknowledged that they were "true and righteous," and nothing more than the aggravated and accumulated wickedness of the world deserved.

Noah also "became heir, by faith, of righteousness." He was justified. His sins were pardoned, and his person was accepted, in virtue of the Redeemer and the redemption strikingly illustrated, and probably designedly prefigured, by the ark of Noah and the deliverance of his house. That Redeemer, and this redemption, the eye of his faith, more or less clearly, saw; and by that Heaven-born principle, he appropriated the virtue of the one, and attained the experience of the other.

Let *us* believe in Messiah's name. Let *us* stand in awe of God. Let *us* anticipate the judgment that awaits the world. Let *us* find refuge in Christ the Ark. Man has not the ark to build; but, standing as it already does in its complete proportions and its finished majesty, man must enter it, and, having entered, must abide within its walls. The clouds are lowring—the storm is coming—the deluge is at hand. The trials of life, the agonies of death, the terrors of judgment, the

fiery wreck of earth, the fiercer horrors of hell—sinner, sinner, these, all these, are impending over thee. But yonder is the ark—the ark of covenanted safety—the ark of everlasting peace. Betake thyself within its walls. Fly, sinner, fly, while yet thou mayest. “Come thou and all thy house into the ark.” Enter it thyself by faith; and believing, still believing, beckon others to its glorious shelter. Then—though no rainbow tell that the fiery flood denounced of Heaven will never overtake the world—yet the “rainbow round about the throne” will be a token firm and sure that *thou* shalt never be destroyed. Then that unchangeable covenant will be thine :—“This is as the waters of Noah unto me : for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth ; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee,” (Isa. liv. 9, 10).

8. *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed ; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.*

The prominence given to Abraham in this record of illustrious names may be accounted for on these grounds. (1.) Abraham was the father and founder of the Hebrew nation. (2.) He was an object of special esteem and admiration to the Jews. (3.) His history affords several remarkable exemplifications of the power and influence of faith. One of these is specified in the present verse.

I. Abraham “was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance.”

The call of Abraham is frequently spoken of in Scripture. An account of it is given by Moses, Gen. xii. 1-3; and a similar one by Stephen, Acts vii. 2, 3. Between the two, however, there may seem to be one discrepancy. Moses associates the Divine call with Abraham's visit to Haran on his way to Canaan—Stephen associates it with his previous residence in Mesopotamia. It is quite conceivable that Abraham was twice called by God to go forth to Canaan—once, in Ur of the Chaldees, and again, in Haran, where his father died, and where he himself tarried for a considerable time. But the call mentioned by Stephen may, after all, be the same as is specified by Moses. In the record of the latter, it may be retrospectively that the call is spoken of; and so our English translators have obviously considered it to be, in giving, Gen. xii. 1, the pluperfect rendering, "Now the Lord *had* said unto Abram."

Whence, then, was Abraham called? He was called from the land of his fathers—from the home of his youth—from the scenes associated with the active efforts and the pleasant friendships of his opening manhood—from the place where the ashes of his kindred lay, and where he had expected to lay down his own to their solemn rest. And whither was he called? To Canaan—a foreign land—a sinful land—but a land for which a high destination was reserved, and which Abraham "should afterwards receive for an inheritance."

This last expression has been supposed to intimate that, at the future advent of Messiah to the world, Abraham will personally reside and reign in Canaan. The idea proceeds on a peculiar notion of the Millennial triumph. The description may simply mean that, in the persons of his descendants, Abraham their ancestor

should be invested with the possession of the land. Canaan, in the course of a few revolving centuries, actually became the inheritance of his Jewish seed; and by not only residing in it, but also purchasing within its borders a sepulchre for himself and his family, he took, as it were, infestment of that "land of promise." Typical, however, it may have been, and probably actually was, of that heavenly home which he has now "received for an inheritance."

Considering the scenes and enjoyments which Abraham was called to leave, and the difficulties and dangers which he was called to meet, his call from Mesopotamia to Canaan might seem severe on *God's* part, and unfortunate on *his*. But truly, the case was otherwise. In summoning Abraham away, Jehovah gave him corresponding promises of glorious good—promises that assured him of true prosperity, and pointed forwards to that joyful epoch in the history of earth in which the Church could lift her exulting hands and cry, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." The very act of self-denial and obedience which Abraham was called to perform was, to himself, a profitable thing; and the command to render it was the kind and salutary discipline of God. And the issue—O was it not an adequate recompence for all?

II. Abraham, thus called of God, "obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

In so far as merely natural thoughts and feelings were concerned, there was much in the country where he dwelt which might have tempted him to stay, and there was much in the cloudy obscurity which rested on the land he was called to enter which might have whispered, 'Do not go.' But there was more than nature now in

the heart of Abraham ; and in the strife, if strife there was, the spirit of obedience triumphed. He "obeyed." He did what God required ; and he did it because God required it. He left "his country, and his kindred, and his father's house," as God commanded him ; and he made the sacrifice in meek and dutiful submission to God's command. In this spirit of high-toned principle, he bade friends and fatherland farewell, and "went out, not knowing whither he went." That he knew not ; but this he knew, that God had summoned him away, and that He from whom the summons came would guide, and guard, and prosper him.

III. Abraham obeyed "*by faith.*"

What did Abraham believe ? And how did his faith prompt him to obedience ? He believed in the character of Him who called him from Ur to Canaan ; and he believed the promise which, in the act of calling him, the Lord addressed to him. Believing who and what Jehovah was, he yielded meek submission to his will. And believing that if he did as Jehovah bade him, the promises that he himself should be a favoured man, that his posterity should swell into a mighty multitude, that his descendants should possess the land which he himself was called to enter, and that at length from his stock should spring the illustrious, blessing-bearing, Seed, he was disposed by gratitude, and by hope encouraged, to do as the Lord had bidden him.

A call is addressed by God to all, to each, of us. Sinner, He bids thee forsake the impure and base pursuits and enjoyments of the world. And thee, believer, thee He summons to hie thee, with patient, cautious, hopeful footsteps, towards thy heavenly home. And O, what glorious promises accompany the call ! what sweet

and sublime encouragements there are to renounce the world, and to seek the heavenly heritage! It is written:—"Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house: so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty," (Ps. xlv. 10, 11)—and again, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18). By faith, like Abraham, obey. Believing the promise, comply with the command. And if, as in Abraham's case, dark uncertainty should sometimes cloud the horizon of the future or even cast its shadows on thy pilgrim-path, still believe, still obey. Bland, yet monitory, are the poet's words:—

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and will break
In blessings on your head.

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning Providence,
He hides a smiling face.

"His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain."*

9. *By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and*

* Cowper.

Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise : 10. *For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

Canaan is here called, “the land of promise.” It was promised that Abraham’s descendants should possess that land. It was promised that, in some sense, it should be given to Abraham himself. And it was destined to be the theatre, as of many great historical events, so of that pre-eminently momentous object of patriarchal promise—the birth of the glorious Seed, the King of Israel, the Saviour of the world.

But though Canaan was “the land of promise,” Abraham “sojourned in it, as in a strange country.” The expression rendered “sojourned in the land,” (*παράκησεν εἰς γῆν*)—admirably explained by Valckenaer (*Schol. in Hebr.*)—denotes the patriarch’s progress to the land as well as his sojourn within its borders. But still, he is represented as treating Canaan “as a strange country,” and, both in this verse and in ver. 13, he is described as a sojourner in that promised land.—It was not his native home. It was not the land in which his eye first opened on the bright blue heaven. It was not the land in which his childhood sported, and in which his opening manhood started in the race of active enterprise. It was not the land in which his kindred dwelt, and in which the ashes of his fathers slept.—And as it was not his native home, so he had no inheritance within its borders. So long as he resided there, there was no stately dwelling on the sunny mountain-side, no pastoral vale with its fleecy wanderers on the grassy margin of the quiet stream, to which he could point and say, ‘That is my inheritance.’ And if, in the evening of his days, he *did* secure a property in Canaan, all he could say of it was this:—‘That is my lonely

sepulchre, that is my humble burial-place.'—Finally, his life in Canaan was that of a wanderer. From place to place he journeyed on—a consecrated and noble Gypsey he—until, in the cave of Machpelah, he found a resting-place at last.

The character and condition of Abraham as “a stranger and sojourner” were indicated and defined by the fact that he “dwelt in tents.” The tabernacles in which he lived are contradistinguished from what is called, in ver. 10, “a city having foundations.” The tents of the patriarch had no foundations. They were but expanded sheets, affixed, by cords and stakes, to the surface of the soil. They were quickly raised, and, when erected, they were destined soon to be taken down again. They were moveable; as beseemed the dwellings of a wandering man—a pilgrim and stranger in the land.

Isaac and Jacob are here associated with Abraham as inhabitants of tents. At Abraham's death, his grandson Jacob must have been, at least, sixteen years of age; and both he and Isaac may have resided, as members of a patriarchal family, in the self-same tents as that venerable sire. But the phrase, “dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob,” does not necessarily mean more than this—that, as Abraham lived in tents, so also did his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob.

But homely and unsettled as was the life of both, they were, as is further intimated, “heirs with Abraham of the same promise.” In certain passages, in giving the promise to Abraham, God associates it with Isaac and Jacob also—he transmits it, as it were, to his servant's pious and honoured heirs. And to Isaac, in Gen. xxvi. 3, 4, and to Jacob, in Gen. xxviii. 13-15, Jehovah directly and immediately addresses the promise which

Abraham had before received. Thus, accordingly, sings the Psalmist, Psalm cv. 8-10:—"He hath remembered his covenant forever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations: which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant." Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were all fathers of the Jewish race, and ancestors of the glorious Seed. To each, and all, of them, in that character, Canaan was assigned. In its pledged, and ultimately consecrated, soil they all laid their ashes down to rest. As they all participated in God's favour and friendship while they lived, they all entered on his glory when they died. And as, when wanderers in Canaan, they all looked forward to the days of the promised Child, so, when those days arrived, they all became members of the noble and blessed Commonwealth which He came to institute—they all "sat down," as it were, "in the kingdom of heaven," (Matt. viii. 11).

Still further, Abraham is here said to have "sojourned" and "dwelt in tabernacles" *by faith*. Faith induced him to travel towards the land, and enter it. Faith disposed him to remain within its borders till he died. Faith cheered him amidst the wanderings of his life. Faith gave him the spirit of a sojourner, and made him willing to be a pilgrim and stranger to the last.

Faith, which is a mother-grace, gives birth to hope. Believing what God says, man hopefully anticipates the good of which the faithful message speaks. So it was in the case of Abraham. One of the ways in which his faith produced what is said of him in ver. 9, was by leading him to "look for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God," (ver. 10); and such a con-

nection between the two great divisions of the passage is denoted by the word "For" in the latter of the verses.

Some have supposed that the city for which Abraham looked was the earthly Jerusalem—the metropolis of Canaan subsequently to the time when his descendants settled in the land. But (1.) The language of the passage indicates that the patriarch expected to be himself a denizen of the city spoken of—and how can such an expectation be said to have been fulfilled in respect of the earthly Jerusalem? (2.) Of that earthly Jerusalem, how could it be said distinctively and peculiarly—even as compared with Abraham's tents—that its "Builder and Maker was God?" And (3.) The parallel and explanatory text, ver. 16, distinctly points to a "better country" and a celestial "city." What, then, *is* the city meant? Either, the glory which awaits believers in the world to come—concentrated now in some sublimer region of the universe, and destined, at "the consummation of all things," to "come down," as "the New Jerusalem," "from God," as the home of pure embodied souls (Rev. xxi.); or, as is equally, if not still more probable, the Messianic Commonwealth—embracing, no doubt, but not exclusively, the glories of the world to come, nor least of all the presence and the fellowship of the great predicted Son of Abraham, the Christ of God, the Glory of the Church, the Light of the New Jerusalem. Abraham "rejoiced to see Messiah's day" in prospective vision (John viii. 56); and now that Messiah's day is come, he is a citizen of the Christian Commonwealth, even as Jesus speaks:—"Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God," (Luke xiii. 28); "Many shall come from the east and west, and sit down with Abra-

ham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven," (Matt. viii. 11). Well may this constitution be called a "city"—in respect of its regular construction, its systematic order, its pre-eminent grandeur, and its high immunities. Nor does it fail to realize the two-fold descriptive statement, here made regarding it. It "hath foundations." The "kingdom," as the idea is expressed in chapt. xii. 28, "cannot be moved." Amidst the wreck of other cities, this survives. Amidst the overthrow of other kingdoms, this abideth firm and fast. That "song" may now "be sung"—"We have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in," (Isa. xxvi. 1, 2). And of the city expected by Abraham and here described, the "Builder and Maker is God." Jehovah is its Architect, and its Possessor too. In Christianity "all things are of God," (2 Cor. v. 18). Christ's advent, Christ's death, Christ's glory; man's conversion, man's acceptance, man's admission into heaven; the articles of the Gospel, the ordinances of the Church, the splendours of the better world—all, all, of these things are of God. The city is a monument and a memorial of his wisdom, power, and grace. But, built by God, it is meant for man. Let us choose it for our home. Let us all be "citizens of" that "no mean city." Having entered on its privileges here, let us hope to realize its more exstatic joys hereafter. Though sojourners on earth, let us be denizens of heaven. And let us be able to say:—"We walk by faith, not by sight," and "We know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," (2 Cor. v. 1, 7).

11. *Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.*

Some suppose that the faith here spoken of is that of Abraham. But beyond all reasonable doubt it is to Sarah herself that the principle is attributed. Faith is associated with the fact of her becoming the mother of a child, in the self-same form in which it is associated in the preceding verses with what was achieved or attained by Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham, and in the succeeding verses with what was said or done by Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and others there specified. Besides, of the phrase "Through faith" at the beginning of the verse, an explanation is given in those expressions at the end of it, "because she judged Him faithful who had promised." True, when Sarah received the promise of a son, she laughed, as if in unbelief. But she was forthwith rebuked with the pointed question, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. xviii. 13, 14); and the reproof may have immediately constrained her to trust in the omnipotence of God. Even the virgin-mother was stumbled when she received the announcement of her illustrious Child (Luke i. 34); and yet, anon, having heard the pointed and decisive words, "With God nothing shall be impossible," she says, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word," and ere long pours forth her sweet and sublime Magnificat. In the New Testament, the piety of Sarah is expressly certified. St. Peter holds her up as an example, and represents devout and obedient women as her daughters, just as St. Paul represents believers as the children of Abraham; (1 Pet. iii. 5, 6). It is well, then, that to man

and woman the former, as well as the latter, should be the object of esteem, and of imitation too. Even if the promise, or other oracular saying, of Jehovah should be strange and startling as that which was given to Sarah, let it, on Heaven's authority, be received as true. And if, before the power of temptation, and from the weakness of the soul, faith in reference to what God has said, have tottered or even given way, let it forthwith ask, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" and, in meek acquiescence, and sturdy confidence, address itself to glorious deeds. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." And O thou of faint and flickering faith, "be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain"—"gird up the loins of thy mind, be sober, and hope to the end."

One of the principal grounds of Sarah's faith, and one of its specific acts or exercises, are presented in the statement that "she judged Him faithful who had promised;" and an important result of that faith is specified in the propositions, "Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age"—expressions which seem to indicate, that the generation of Isaac was not *essentially* a miraculous event, but the natural result of a supernatural restoration of the energy and vigour of her animal economy. Meet emblem of another restoration, the resuscitation of the buried frame!—a work on which the argument, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" is emphatically brought to bear in the apostle's question, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" (Acts xxvi. 8).

12. *Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good*

as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea-shore innumerable.

The connective word "therefore" ($\delta\iota\omicron$) may naturally and appropriately be referred both to the faith of Abraham and to that of Sarah. The phrase "of one" denotes, of course, Abraham; and it is fitted to remind a reader of that boast of the carnal and wicked Jews:—"Abraham was one, and he inhabited the land; but we are many, the land is given us for an inheritance," (Ezek. xxxiii. 24). "Him as good as dead" is similar to the phrase, Rom. iv. 19, "his own body now dead," and denotes the fact that Abraham, who was "now about an hundred years old," was become impotent by age. In the figurative expressions by which the multitude of the patriarch's posterity is set forth, there is an obvious reference to like expressions applied to the same subject in the Mosaic history, (Gen. xv. 5, xxii. 17).

How truly, and how strikingly, has the promise thus figuratively expressed been realized! Jacob's posterity multiplied in Egypt, in the course of about 200 years, from seventy-five persons to "six hundred thousand men, besides women and children." Moses, using one of the expressive figures here employed, thus addresses the Israelites, Deut. i. 10, 11:—"The Lord your God hath multiplied you, and behold! ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude. The Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you as He hath promised you." When settled in Canaan, in the days of their prosperity, how vast was the number of their armies! and how vaster still the total number of their nation! Even now, shivered though they be and scattered to the winds, they form no inconsiderable portion of the world's inhabitants.

We are taught by St. Paul (Rom. iv. 11-18), that God's promise to Abraham of a numerous seed had a specific reference to believers, whether of Jewish or of Gentile stock. And it is an animating thought, that even now, amidst the various denominations of the Christian Church, there are many whom the Omniscient may be supposed to own as "Abraham's children"—that, since the fall of Adam until now, such have been gathered, in thousands and tens of thousands, to the world of perfect purity and peace—that the millennial age shall behold on earth, and shall transmit to heaven, a mighty host of ransomed and regenerated souls—and that, at the last, there shall be gathered around "the throne of God and of the Lamb" a white-robed "multitude which no man can number." As in multitude, so in splendour, this blessed throng shall resemble "the stars of heaven." It is written:—"They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever," (Dan. xii. 3); and again, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," (Matt. xiii. 43). Who would not be a star in that resplendent galaxy? Who would not, through all eternity, participate in the glory, and reflect the light, of Him, the seed of Abraham, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, whose "day," in distant vision, the patriarch "rejoiced to see," and whose heavenly majesty now pours its rays on his enraptured soul?

13. *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

The words "These all" cannot denote all the individuals mentioned in the previous portion of the chapter as men of faith; for one of these, Enoch, never died at all. It must be specifically the patriarchal series of believers specified in ver. 8-11 that the sacred writer means—namely, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob. Respecting these, four things are here affirmed.

I. They "all died in faith."

They *all died*. As in Gen. v. the record of the seemingly endless lives of the antediluvians habitually terminates with the simple but impressive saying, "and he died"—a saying which, in that connection, is said to have even been used by God as an instrument of conversion—so, in the Mosaic history of the pious patriarchs, death is regularly found to terminate their sometimes long-protracted lives. How pious, peaceful, prosperous, soever, their earthly course might be, it was, in no case, perpetual. Though God gave them hope in death, He gave none of them exemption from its cold and fatal grasp. Like their followers in the pilgrimage of life, they came, sooner or later, to the journey's end. As for Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob—faith made them wise and good and happy, but it made none of them immortal. Dust they were, and unto dust they have returned. "These all died."

But they "died *in faith*." And in what faith? In the faith in which they had previously lived. In death, as in life, they believed the promises of God. In death, as in life, they believed that He would shield their persons, multiply their seed, make their posterity possessors of the land, and raise up a glorious Deliverer for man.

It is a pleasant thought, that the Guardian of the

good maintains their faith amidst the storms and tumults of the world, and makes the light of their active course the lamp of their otherwise dark departure hence. And verily, the death-bed needs the principle of faith—religious, Messianic faith—faith in the mediation of the Son, and in the promises of his Eternal Sire. In prospect of the mystery of death—of its testing scenes and of its solemn issues—how important, how urgently important, to be believers, genuine and justified believers, now!

II. Those here spoken of, when they died, had “not received the promises.”

It is said of Abraham, verse 17, that, even when “he offered up Isaac,” he “had received the promises;” and certain other ancients are represented, ver. 33, as having “received promises.” How, then, is it here said of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob, that, even when they came to die, they “had not received the promises?” As the word *hope* sometimes means *the thing hoped for*, so the word *promise* occasionally means *the thing promised*, (Luke xxiv. 49; Acts xxvi. 6, 7; Heb. vi. 15; &c.) Now, even when the persons here mentioned finished their earthly lives, although God had given them promises, which constituted objects for their faith and foundations for their hope, those promises still remained, in a great measure, unfulfilled. They had not yet a numerous seed. They were not yet, in their own persons, or in that of their posterity, possessors of the land in which they sojourned. Messiah had not yet been born. “All the families of the earth” had not yet been “blessed in” that promised Son. And they themselves had not yet “sat down in that kingdom of God,” that spiritual and happy Common-

wealth, in which the Mediatorial Christ is the anointed King, nor entered "the city that hath foundations"—the "better country, that is, the heavenly."

III. Nevertheless, they "had seen the promises afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them."

These expressions denote acts, or exercises, of faith, and vividly represent the workings of that sacred principle in the minds of these pious ancients. They "saw the promises," that is, the objects promised, "afar off;" they looked along the vista of the future, and traced the rise, the growth, the triumph of what God had pledged himself to realize—the multitudinous seed, the possession of the land, by their own descendants, the Blessing-Bearer, the "strong city," the "better country." They "were persuaded of" those promises—they were assured that the things promised would come to pass—trusting in the wisdom, mercy, power, and faithfulness of God, they felt assured that He would do as He had said. Finally, they "embraced" the promises, that is, the promised realities—they appropriated them, with warm esteem and cordial welcome, to themselves—they thought of them with lively interest, and even from the distant land brought home the grapes of Eshcol and feasted on the pleasant fruits.—What a fine example have these ancients given of how *we* should avail ourselves of the noble privileges which, in this later era of the world—in this Messianic age—are offering to pour their treasures in our lap, and of how we should look forwards to those future glories, whether of earth or heaven, which God's own promises reveal!

IV. They "confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers on the earth."

That they *were* pilgrims and strangers in Canaan and

on earth has already been set forth ; but here, the statement that “they sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country” (ver. 9), is supplemented by the statement that they “confessed themselves to be strangers and pilgrims on the earth,” or, perhaps rather, *in the land*, (ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς). Such a confession was honest, bold, and practical—accurately expressive of their own sentiments and feelings, and fitted to be useful to such as heard or witnessed it. Examples of such a confession occur, Gen. xxiii. 4, xlvii. 8, 9 ; Psalm xxxix. 12. Let believers, by words and works, make the same confession still ; and let them, “as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul,” and “pass the time of their sojourning here in fear,” (1 Pet. i. 17, ii. 11).

14. *For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.* 15. *And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.* 16. *But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly : wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God ; for he hath prepared for them a city.*

In the first of these verses, from the confession specified in ver. 13, the inference is drawn, that the pious ancients who made that confession felt a sense of want, and aimed at another home than they had found in Canaan. In ver. 15, the fact is noticed, that they might, had they been inclined, have exchanged that foreign country for the land of their fathers—the land from which Abraham and Sarah *literally*, and in *their* persons, Isaac and Jacob *virtually*, had come out. In the same verse, however, it is suggested, that they did not

thus return to Ur of the Chaldees—that they did not seek, by such an expedient, to relieve their trials, to sweeten their lives, or to find for themselves a resting-place from their wanderings, or a country which they could call their own. In ver. 16 is given a similar description as is contained in ver. 10 of the future home of the faithful—or probably rather, of that glorious and blessed constitution which Christ, by his advent, sacrifice, and ascension, has ushered in, and of which the pious patriarchs and prophets, in common with believers who have lived under the Christian Dispensation, are honoured denizens. In that verse, too, the ancients spoken of are represented as “desiring that better country”—recognizing its value, and thirsting after its privileges. And in words expressive alike, of the condescension and generosity of God, and of the honour and safety of believers, the illustration thus concludes:—“Wherefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city.” Happy they who have this God for “*their* God”—for whom the “city” of the Lord has been “prepared”—who, here and hereafter, possess its vast immunities and noble privileges—and who shall forever shine as gems among the multitude of those who shall be “for a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of their God!” O let them realize the grandeur of their calling; nor let them ever be ashamed of Him who “is not ashamed to be called *their* God.” The city of which they are the denizens has its duties, as well as its enjoyments. In seeking to taste the latter, let them faithfully discharge the former. And as the city is prepared for *them*, let them endeavour to be more abundantly prepared for *it*. Let the very idea of returning to the

country they have left—the land of vile pursuits, unhallowed joys, and wild rebellion against God—be repulsive to their souls. And O, let aliens hie them to the “strong city,” and seek the “better country.” Well would the resolution of Ruth befit them in reference to the privileges and prospects of the friend of God:—“Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God,” (Ruth i. 16).

17. *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son; 18. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called; 19. Accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.*

Having, in the verses immediately preceding, described Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in common—as constituting, so to speak, along with Sarah, one bright constellation in the moral firmament; the sacred writer now returns to his specification of individual men—resolving, as it were, the constellation into its several parts, into its separate stars. And having, in the general description, specifically remarked the fact that the pious ancients spoken of “*died in faith,*” he now—in speaking of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, in succession—selects, in the case of each, what may be considered as the crowning, or consummating, recorded exemplification of his faith—an exemplification actually afforded, in certain of the instances, in the article of death, and, in all of them, towards the close of life.

First in the series, ‘the father of the faithful’ comes

again to view. In these verses, six things are affirmed respecting him.

I. Abraham "was tried."

In this part of the representation, there is obviously a reference to that statement of Moses, introductory to the record contained in Gen. xxii. of the sacrifice of Isaac—"God did tempt Abraham." The statement, of course, does not, cannot mean, that God seduced the patriarch to do anything that was sinful. The word rendered "tempt" means *try*; and in Scripture *temptations* and *trials* denote such afflictive dispensations as are fitted to put to the test the character and principles of those whom they befall. So, James i. 2, 3, 12; 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. It is in that sense that it is said in Genesis, that "God did tempt Abraham," and here, that Abraham "was tried." And how truly was the command of God to Abraham to offer up his son a trial! Was it not a dark and distressing dispensation? *Ye* can answer who have lost an Isaac, or have an Isaac to lose. And was it not fitted to put Abraham to the test? to define what manner of man he was? to determine whether he was a man of faith, and, if faith he had, whether it was faint and feeble or vigorous and strong? True, God needed no information on the point. He knew, before He issued the command, as well as afterwards, what Abraham, in this and in all respects, actually was; nor can any opposite conclusion be legitimately drawn from those oracular words, addressed to Abraham when, by offering up his son; he had stood the formidable trial:—"Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me," (Gen. xxii. 12). But still, the Divine command put Abraham to the test; and the application of

that trial was fitted to prove useful, in determining his character, and exhibiting his faith, to himself, to the Hebrew Church, and, if we will rightly ponder the matter, to *us* who are separated from the event by so long an interval of years, but are called, in the record of Moses, and by the very reference of the present passage, reverentially to contemplate the patriarch's faith, and studiously to imitate the patriarch's example.

The terms of the command in which Abraham is required to sacrifice his son may show how truly, and how severely, the patriarch was tried. "Take now," said Jehovah to his servant, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of," (Gen. xxii. 2). Hitherto the very name of *Isaac* had been music in Abraham's ear. It was the familiar representative of his brightest hopes and tenderest joys—it was the chosen memorial of Heaven's own promises. And who, and what, was he who bore that fondly-cherished name? He was Abraham's "son"—one to whom he had instrumentally given the life which he was now required to take away. He was Abraham's "*only* son"—for by Sarah, his wedded wife, no other son had he; Ishmael and his mother had now been banished from his house, and were wanderers far away; and it was in Isaac, not in Ishmael, that the promises centered—on the former, not the latter, that their accomplishment depended. And how did Abraham feel in reference to this only, this important, child? "Whom thou lovest"—that expression yields an answer. Isaac was dear to Abraham—the ties of nature and the ties of grace combined to knit them strongly and tenderly together. And

what was Abraham to do with Isaac? He was to "take" him. To "take" him—wherefore and whither? To take him to Moriah's mountain-solititudes that he might gratify the taste, and feast the fancy, of the youth, with what was fair and beautiful around? No. To take him to some haunt of academic lore, that his young spirit might be trained for the lofty aims, and strenuous efforts, of a long, successful, and honourable life? No. To take him to his paternal bosom, and resolve that he would never, never part with him until his own tongue was mute, and his own arms were motionless? No. Abraham was to "take his son, his only son Isaac, whom he loved," that, on "one of the mountains which the Lord should shew" the father, the son, the cherished son, might be offered up in sacrifice. And who was, by fire and blood, to offer Isaac? Abraham—Abraham himself. And when?—O when? When the bloom of youthful beauty had passed away? when the sturdy manhood of the victim could better bear the pain? or when hoary hairs should gather on his brow, and the vigour of his days be gone? Ah no! "Take *now* thy son," said the oracular Voice, "Take *now* thy son . . . and offer him for a burnt offering." "Never," says Bishop Hall (*Contemplat.*)—"Never any gold was tried in so hot a fire. . . . But God knew that he spake to an Abraham, and Abraham knew that he had to do with a God."

II. "Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac."

A minute historical narrative of this event occurs in Gen. xxii. 1-19. So soon as the Divine command was given, Abraham addressed himself to the awful work required. At early dawn, he "rose, and saddled his ass," and, with Isaac at his side—the "lamb for a burnt offering"—proceeded on his melancholy way. During

the three days which elapsed ere they reached Moriah, much must have occurred which, in the case of an ordinary man, would have tempted a return to his quiet tent. The very words, "My father," uttered by the youthful traveller—for he was now only about sixteen years of age—and his earnest, if not anxious, inquiry, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" were fitted to stir, to its depths, the patriarch's heart. But onward he went, still onward, till "he came to the place which God had told him of." And now, he rears the altar, and lays on it the wood, and binds his son, and consigns him to the spot—the sad, though sacred, spot—where his bosom is destined to receive the fatal stroke, and his tender limbs to be consumed with the sacrificial fire. "And Abraham," adds the historian, in terms how simple and yet how impressive!—"And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son." An angel of the Lord arrests him—a ram is offered instead of Isaac—and the doomed heir of Abraham is spared. And yet, virtually, the sacrifice of Isaac was accomplished. The patriarchal sire had given up to God the child of his affections and his hopes. He had consented to the awful form of sacrifice prescribed by Heaven. And as for the trial of his faith—that was realized just as truly, and almost as completely, as if Isaac had been actually slain. In common, then, with St. James (James ii. 21), the sacred writer here affirms, that Abraham "*offered up* Isaac." And as it was in these commendatory terms that Jehovah arrested the patriarch's outstretched arm—"Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from

me ;” so, at the close of that pathetic and striking scene, He thus addressed him—“ By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore ; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies ; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice.”

Yes, God delights in obedience to his voice. Obedience is man’s highest reason, as it is what Heaven most righteously requires. In all spheres and in all circumstances, it must be willingly, diligently, rendered ; nor may difficulty or danger be allowed to supersede its performance, or to impede its exercise. We must even be ready, at the bidding of our God, to sacrifice our Isaacs. Alas ! how many are but ill-prepared to do so ! How many, when God removes a valued treasure or a cherished friend, are scarcely even ready, in hearty sincerity, to say :—“ The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord !”

III. The person who offered up Isaac was “ he that had received the promises,” and he who was offered was Abraham’s “ only-begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called.”

This proposition is obviously introduced in order to show to what a special trial of faith the patriarch was subjected, and how remarkable was the obedience which he rendered, and the confidence which he maintained. God himself had promised that Isaac should be the father of a family, the founder of a mighty nation, and the ancestor of the illustrious Seed ; and yet God him-

self commanded Abraham — the very man to whom these promises had been addressed—to offer up this ‘child of hope’ in the flush and blossom of his boyhood. A strange contrariety, not to say contradiction, there was, and must needs have seemed to be, between the Divine promise and the Divine command. And yet, Abraham still believed the one, and he, at the same time, stood prepared, yea, actively addressed himself, to obey the other. In this case, as in another, he “against hope believed in hope;” and, though no doubt startled, and perhaps perplexed, he heard, and hearkened, and obeyed. A noble triumph, and a sublime example!

IV. “Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac *by faith.*”

Mere nature would probably have asked, “How can these things be?” An unconverted Abraham would probably have thought or said:—‘Surely the command can never be from God; or, if it be, surely the promise cannot be fulfilled, and therefore He who gave it cannot be absolutely and infinitely true.’ But not thus did Abraham reason. Well aware that God could practically reconcile what stumbled human reason and baffled human ingenuity, and able even, as in ver. 19 we are told he was, to conceive a way in which Heaven could fulfil the promises though Isaac should be thus early sacrificed; Abraham continued to believe those promises, and his faith both prompted and encouraged him to comply with the command. Another fine example this—one of many recorded in the present chapter—of the might and mastery of faith! It restrained the tumult of the heart. It silenced the rebel-dictates of the will. It suffered not Reason to contradict her God.

It made the patriarch, in his season of sorest trial, patient, tranquil, resigned, obedient. Such faith, and such triumphant exercise of faith, be ours!

V. Abraham, when "by faith he offered up Isaac," "accounted that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead."

It is not necessarily implied in this proposition that Abraham had received a distinct revelation of that great article of the Christian creed—the general resurrection of the dead. This has been "brought to light by the Gospel," and perhaps was not dogmatically known to the patriarchs at all. It is not the fact that the dead were to be raised, but God's power to restore a life which has been extinguished, that is here spoken of as taken into account by Abraham. And if it had been by the resurrection of Isaac that God was to accomplish his promise that he was to be the father of a family, the founder of a nation, and the ancestor of Christ, it must have been before the general resurrection of the dead that this particular case of resuscitation was to be realized.

But although this text does not satisfactorily prove that Abraham knew of the general resurrection, it shows that he conceived it possible, as he well might do, that Isaac should be raised from the dead, and believed that rather would God bring such an event to pass than suffer his promises to fail. Essential and necessary inconsistency and contradiction between two things renders it unsuitable, and in the case of many minds, impossible, that both should be received and held as true. Such inconsistency and contradiction some might have alleged to exist between the promise and the command of God to Abraham. But Abraham could reconcile the

two. He saw that Isaac might die before he was the parent of a single child, and yet might be the happy father of many sons, and the honoured ancestor of a mighty nation. He “accounted that God was able to raise up Isaac from the dead”—to restore his life—to reanimate his ashes; and he saw that Isaac, if thus brought back by the omnipotence of Heaven, might still prove one in whom the promises should be fulfilled. And “wherefore should it be thought a thing incredible with *us* that God should raise the dead?” (Acts xxvi. 8)—and wherefore should not the doctrine of the future resurrection and a world to come serve to solve certain otherwise perplexing riddles, and to dissipate much of the darkness that is apt to settle on the soul?

VI. “In a figure” Abraham actually “received Isaac from the dead.”

This statement has been supposed by some to intimate that Isaac was a type of Christ; by others, that Isaac’s deliverance was a prefiguration of the resurrection from the dead. It seems unnatural that either of these ideas should be introduced in the present text—at any rate, *for* a figure, would be a more explicit and intelligible way of expressing a typical reference than, “*in* a figure,” (*ἐν παραβολῇ*). The word rendered “figure” might mean, *great risk*, or, *a bold venture*; but in such a sense, it would ill harmonize both with the preposition and with the verb associated with it (*ἐν, in; ἐκούισατο, received back*). The idea seems to be—that, when Isaac was offered up on the altar, he was, as it were—he was figuratively—in a state of death; and that, when he was restored in safety to his father’s arms, he was, as it were—he was, figuratively—raised from the dead. This is substantially the interpretation given by Calvin,

Castellio, Grotius, Kuinoel, Bleek, Bloomfield, and other learned critics. But even according to this interpretation, the deliverance of Isaac represents, in some sort, the resurrection of the dead, and may well direct man's meditative thoughts towards that still future, but absolutely certain, fact. And as for that glorious resurrection of the blessing-bearing Seed of which Isaac's restoration is by many considered as a type—it is a blessed pledge of the believer's own triumphant deliverance from the ruins of the grave, and one of the strong and sure foundations of his brightest and highest hopes, (1 Cor. xv. 20-23; 1 Pet. i. 3, 21). Among the hills where Isaac was offered up, the Lord himself was sacrificed. But He who "was dead" is "alive" again, and "liveth for evermore, amen; and hath the keys of Hades and of Death," (Rev. i. 18).

20. *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.*

Even in the history and experience of Isaac there are some striking and, by no means, uninteresting particulars. As the child of promise, he was, to Abraham and to man, the realization, in some measure, of the covenant of God. The treatment he received from Ishmael constituted him, as St. Paul teaches (Gal. iv. 29), a representative of the persecuted Church. The meekness with which he seems to have consented to be laid by his father on the altar of burnt-offering is expressive of youthful piety. The tears he shed over his mother's grave indicate his filial sensibility and love. His retreat, at eventide, for meditative thought, shows him to have been devout. His retirement from the strifes occasioned by certain wells of water which Abra-

ham had dug exhibits him as a man of peace. And, not to multiply particulars, the sacred writer here refers to an important transaction which occurred in the later period of Isaac's life, and traces it to the patriarch's faith.

And yet, there was much that was blameable, in that transaction, on the part of the several individuals more immediately concerned. It is recorded at length in Gen. xxvii.; and the narrative makes it plain that Rebekah, Jacob, Esau, and even Isaac himself, were all chargeable with sin in the matter of the benediction pronounced by the patriarch on his sons. To their mother Rebekah, indeed, God had oracularly said that "the elder should serve the younger;" and no doubt, when she saw her husband so much disposed to pronounce the special blessing on the elder, she was jealous for the fulfilment of the oracle of Heaven. But to resort to falsehood, whether of word or deed, in order to bring that oracle to pass, was wrong; and the part she took to secure the benediction for her younger son was insulting to Isaac, degrading to herself, and fitted to injure the very youth whom she loved so tenderly. Alas that there should ever be cause to say that a son is bound to disobey the counsel of a mother's voice! But to resist the proposal of Rebekah was clearly the duty of Jacob, and, in practically consenting to it, he greatly sinned. As for Esau, the wily arts by which he was beset make one feel a somewhat tender interest in his cause; and, listening to his "great and exceeding bitter cry," "Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father!" the reader may be ready, and not unreasonably, to mingle his own tears with those of the sadly disconcerted sup-

plicant. And yet, when he had profanely sold his birthright, what title had he to claim the blessing which that birthright carried in its train? Nor was the hostility with which he forthwith followed Jacob, the lawful indignation of an offended brother's heart, but the murderous rage of an exasperated and unforgiving foe. And was Isaac, believing Isaac, altogether faultless in the case? Alas! no. Though the devotional spirit which he exercised in other days still lingered in his bosom, now that "his eyes were dim and he could not see;" that love of "his son's venison" which prompted him to fix the special affections of his paternal heart on that "profane person," indicates a very undue regard to the gratification of his less noble part. The partiality itself was blameable. And as for his intention to bestow the special blessing on Esau—he knew, or should have known, the claims which the oracular words, "The elder shall serve the younger," had in determining Jacob to be the peculiar object of the patriarchal benison.

Still, the statement in the present text is explicit and express, "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come"—a statement which specifies, both what the patriarch did, and how he did it.

I. "Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come."

The blessing pronounced by Isaac on Jacob is recorded, Gen. xxvii. 27-29, and that pronounced by him on Esau, Gen. xxvii. 39, 40. The terms of both blessings show that they referred not only to the two individual men, but also to their posterity—the Israelites, on the one hand, and the Edomites on the other. A special power of foresight has sometimes been attributed to

venerable age or ebbing life. Most certainly, however, the patriarchal benediction of Isaac, like the ampler ones of his son Jacob, was more than the result of 'old experience.' It was the faithful prediction of what long afterwards really transpired. The reference to the future—even the distant future—is denoted by the phrase, "concerning things to come."

II. "Isaac blessed his sons *by faith*."

True, he mistook Jacob for Esau when he blessed the former. But still, in pronouncing the benediction on both, he acted under the influence of faith in the promises of God, and, even after he found that he had mistaken the person of the younger for that of the elder son, he confirmed the blessing which he had pronounced on Jacob, thus emphatically addressing Esau:—"I have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed," (Gen. xxvii. 33). And although temporal benefits were all that the prophetic patriarch guaranteed to Esau, yet that is by no means inconsistent with the exercise of faith in foretelling them; for this principle, according to the view given of it in this chapter, may embrace the promise of *temporal* just as truly as that of *spiritual* good, and still may the believer's faith appropriate such a pledge on the part of his God as this:—"Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure."

Parents, ye may think that, neither in death nor in life, is it yours to bestow such a patriarchal blessing as Isaac's on your children. And certainly there was something peculiar in the case. But yours it is, and yours ye ought to know and acknowledge it to be, to commend those children to the friendly care of the Divine Omnipotence—to tell them, not as prophets, but as those who have learned what God, in his pro-

mises and threatenings, reveals, of the good or evil which will befall them according to their moral character and spiritual state—and to beseech them never to renounce or to forsake the Lord God of their fathers. And this, all this, ye must do in the exercise of living faith.

21. *By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.*

The earthly pilgrimage of Jacob was almost ended. It had proved, like less important lives, a career diversified with good and ill. Some of its passages—such as that connected with the fancied death of Joseph, and those associated with the known misconduct of certain of his children—had been very dark. And yet, in seasons of such temporal prosperity as that in which he heard that Joseph was alive, and of such spiritual triumph as that in which the vision of the mystic ladder burst upon his mind's clear eye, very exquisite must his ecstasy have been. Earth's joys and sorrows were now hastening to a close. But faith survived in the bosom of the saint, and, looking backwards on the past with gratitude, it also looked forwards to the future with hope. Certain of the acts and exercises of Jacob's faith in his dying hours, are here specified.

I. "By faith he blessed both the sons of Joseph."

The sacred writer is now confirming and illustrating the proposition, ver. 13, "These all *died* in faith." And that is probably the true explanation of the fact that, instead of selecting, in order to exhibit the power and virtue of Jacob's faith, some such incident of the patriarch's previous life as his victorious struggle with

the angel, he fixes on the fact of old Israel blessing his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh, together with an act of worship which he rendered on the eve of death. At that solemn period of his life, however, Jacob blessed his sons as well as his grandsons; and it may seem strange that only his dying benedictions on the latter are here specified. One reason, perhaps, is this—that the blessing of the sons of Joseph preceded that of his own immediate children, and that the Mosaic narrative of the former ushers in the record of the latter. Moreover, there was this striking peculiarity in the benediction of Ephraim and Manasseh—that Jacob, therein, constituted them his own sons, and heads of future Israelitish tribes. Still farther, in blessing Joseph's children, their dying grandsire, in the exercise of faith, reviewed the past course of his earthly pilgrimage. The whole narrative, as contained in Gen. xlviii., is well worth examining. The venerable patriarch himself, his affectionate and noble-hearted Joseph, and the youths whom their father had so wisely brought along with him to their grandsire's couch, are all interesting characters in the domestic groupe, and must all have been moved to tenderness as, crossing his hands over the heads of his grandchildren, old Jacob thus reviewed the past and anticipated the future:—"God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." It was manifestly as a believer in what God had told him that dying Jacob spake and acted as he did on this interesting occasion;

and it is here expressly said :—“By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph.”

II. “By faith he worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.”

In Gen. xlvii. 31, it is said, “Israel bowed himself on the bed’s head.” The Hebrew words so rendered in Genesis are translated in the Septuagint according to the sense given in the Epistle. The rendering of that old Greek version is adopted in the present text; and our translators have rightly rendered it. But how is the difference between the statement in Genesis and that in the Epistle to be accounted for? (1.) The same Hebrew word means either *bed* or *staff* according to the way in which it is pointed; and as the Masoretic points were introduced later than the time of the apostles, a wrong application may have been given them in the present case, so as to yield the meaning *bed* instead of the signification *staff*. (2.) It is obvious that it is specifically on the fact that, when dying, Jacob worshipped God, and did so by faith, that the sacred writer here lays stress; and therefore it is, at least, conceivable that, even supposing *bed* to be the proper rendering of the Hebrew word, he did not think it necessary, for his present purpose, to alter the quotation from the popular Greek version. (3.) He may have known that the dying patriarch, besides bending over the bed’s head, also leaned upon his staff, when doing homage to his God; and may, therefore, not have made any alteration on the words of the Septuagint. Both in the Hebrew, and in the Greek as here quoted, a preposition precedes the word for *head* or *top*; so as distinctly to set aside the doctrine that there is in the statement a warrant for the worship of relics.

Here, then, we have another interesting fact in the history of dying Jacob—a fact associated with the weakness of his age and the prospect of his death. And as to bless the relatives and friends about to be left behind, so to pour out the soul, in reverential and affectionate devotion, before the God into whose presence it is about to pass, is an exercise which well beseems the death-bed. How sweet, and how sublime, to pass away to heaven on the wings of faith and prayer!

22. By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

In Gen. i. 24, 25, the historian says:—"And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." This narrative, and the facts which it records, are obviously referred to in the present text.

The prime-minister of Pharaoh was just about to close his brilliant career. But, amidst the darkness of a death-bed, bright visions of the future broke in upon his soul, and, amidst the Egyptian pomp and splendour which still lingered around his couch, the heart of a Hebrew, the faith of a saint, was burning in his breast. Of the Exodus from Egypt God had given to father Abraham a promise, recorded Gen. xv. 13, 14. In that hereditary promise, and in kindred promises relative to the possession of Canaan, Joseph put unfaltering confidence; and, for the glory of God, and the guidance and encouragement of survivors, he "made mention," in the

season of his departure hence, of what constituted the object of his faith. As both Moses and the writer of this Epistle add, he also “gave commandment concerning his bones.” These he wished, at the future Exodus, to be carried from Egypt to the land of promise; and it is interesting to know that they were, in due time, removed from the former, and committed to the soil of the latter (Exod. xiii. 19; Josh. xxiv. 32). It was in faith, we are taught, that Joseph’s injunctions on the subject were given. But assuredly, it does not follow that he expected to possess, personally, the land of Canaan—a supposition to which certain believers in a premillennial resurrection of the pious dead, and a literal reign on the earth, for a thousand years, of Christ and his risen saints, seem disposed to commit themselves. He felt, however, a pious satisfaction in thinking of his bones as resting, with those of his fathers, among their common descendants, in the Divinely-consecrated land for which he looked; and his dying injunctions on the subject, the token and expression of *his own* faith, were fitted to inspire survivors with like assurance.

Let *us* seek, as in life, so also in death, to exercise religious faith, and to guide and animate surrounding friends. How important, in that momentous season, to give glory to God, and to bequeath precious counsels and lofty consolations to those we are about to leave behind! Happy for *them*, if they shall rightly learn the lessons taught them from the dying bed! And happy for *us* if, having, by the merits of Christ, *secured*, we shall, in the confidence of faith, *believe*, that our souls shall soar to Paradise and our ashes “rest in hope!”

23. *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three*

months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

Here begins what may be considered a third series of exemplifications of the power of faith. The first comprehends *antediluvian*, and the second, *patriarchal* believers. The birth and legation of Moses introduced the Jews to the Economy of the law; and the sacred writer here introduces a number of instances of faith which occurred under that Economy with a reference to the birth of the distinguished man by whom, instrumentally, it was ushered in.

In the last two verses the reader is called to stand beside the death-beds of Jacob and Joseph, and listen to certain of those affectionate and oracular words which trembled on the parting breath of those pious patriarchs. Here he is summoned to a scene, not of death but of birth—not of *departure from* the world, but of *entrance into* it. And yet, there is an intimate and indissoluble connection between the two things. Man is born to die. That infant-child, by the very fact of birth, has been constituted the heir of death. That tender scion of a degenerate stock must needs be blighted like its parent-stem. He who has just entered, by the bright gate of birth, on the brighter sunshine of the world, must soon pass, through the black portal of death, into the dark eternity beyond. If evangelically interpreted, even that Persian epigram conveys a sound and salutary lesson for us all:—

“ On parent-knees, a naked, new-born child,
Weeping thou sat'st, while all around thee smiled;
So live that, sinking in thy last, long sleep,
Calm thou may'st smile, while all around thee weep.”*

* Translation by Sir William Jones.

The infant whose birth is recorded in the present verse is Moses, afterwards the renowned counsellor and commander of the Hebrew hosts. It is, however, to the character and procedure of his parents that, in the first instance, our attention is directed. And it is an instructive and interesting fact that both parents exercised a common faith, and pursued a common conduct, in the treatment of their infant-child. In the narrative contained in the 2d chapter of Exodus, the mother is the only one of the two parents whose care of the newborn babe is expressly specified. And certainly a child, in its infant-days, is specially dependent on her whose office it is, literally as well as figuratively, to "gather the lambs with" her "arm and to carry them in" her "bosom." But here we are expressly taught that the father participated in the faith which animated the mother's heart, and that, under the influence of the self-same principle, both pursued the self-same course in reference to the child entrusted to their common care. How important that it should habitually be so in domestic life! In respect of the authority of God, and in reference to their own personal salvation, both parents alike need to believe what God has told them and to do what God has commanded them. In respect of the mutual relation in which they stand to each other, and in reference to the consecration of their union, they need to be inspired, in common, with that sacred principle of faith, and to follow, in common, that course of prescribed behaviour, which constitutes satisfactory and essential evidence that they who travel, hand in hand, along the pilgrimage of time are "fellow-heirs of the grace of life," and shall meet again, for immortal friendship, in a purer and sublimer world, beyond the reach of sin and suffer-

ing and death. And finally, in respect of their common relation to their children, and in reference to the great and momentous ends of youthful education—for consistency, clearness, energy, and success, how much, how very much, depends on harmony in faith and conduct on the part of those to whom that sacred charge has been entrusted by Him who comes—with reverence be it said—like Pharaoh's daughter to the mother of Moses, and says to either parent, "Take this child and nurse it for me!" Better, far better, that one of the parents, than that neither, should be a true believer and a faithful guide. But better, greatly better, still, that both should realize these noble and incumbent characters.

Two things are here associated with the faith of the parents of Moses.

I. "By faith" the child "was hid" by them "three months."

The circumstances in which, and the reason why, the parents of Moses thus concealed him are recorded in the 1st chapter of Exodus. Joseph had been a man of distinction at the court of Egypt; and although he died at last, it was in the midst of pomp and power he did so—if, indeed, pomp and power can be associated with the idea of death at all. But when Israel's race had "grown and multiplied in Egypt," there "arose another king, who knew not Joseph." This bad sovereign signalized his reign by a command that the male children born to the Hebrews should be destroyed. First, he commanded those whose office it was to assist the Hebrew mothers at an interesting hour of their maternal history to kill the infant-sons; and when, because the midwives "feared God," they disobeyed the king, "Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast

into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive." It was in these circumstances that Moses was born, and in the face of this command that his parents hid their infant-child.

How they contrived to conceal him "for three months" we are not expressly told. That, like the midwives—who, though religiously disposed, seem to have violated, in some degree, the law of truth—the parents of Moses resorted to wily arts or false evasions, the claims of charity forbid us to believe. It is probable, however, that they would laboriously conceal the fact that they had become the father and mother of a son, and lay the infant to his rest in one of the most hidden corners of their house. And who can blame, who would not rather commend, them for the deed? To murder, under the name of policy or government, none of Pharaoh's subjects was bound, or entitled, to commit himself, even at the bidding of their king; and if any of them might lawfully have sought to protect the infant, surely, surely, it was lawful, it was incumbent, on the part of his own parents so to do. And it was "by faith" they "hid" the child. They believed the promise of their God that a deliverance and a deliverer should come for groaning Israel; and it seems as if, connecting the aspect of the child with the terms of the promise, they supposed the deliverance to be near, and the deliverer to be he—their own dear smiling babe. For it is forthwith added, "because they saw he was a proper child."

The epithet here, and by Stephen, (Acts vii. 20), applied to the infant-Moses (*ἁγροῦτος*), denotes what is remarkable for grace, or majesty, or beauty. It seems, then, that the person of the infant was thus distinguished. Probably, his tender form was exquisitely wrought, and

his countenance, though rather a little twinkling star than the full-orbed sun, was kindled up into an intellectual and moral radiance by which was realized, more than in ordinary infant-beauty, the poet's phrase, 'the human face divine.' Such omens of the future arrested the attention of his parents, and prompted and encouraged them to hide the interesting child. Alive, like other parents, to the natural attractions of a loveliness which was so well fitted to adorn their hearth, they were probably the more disposed, by these natural motives, to run a formidable risk in order to preserve a gem so exquisitely fair; although, indeed, it may be hoped that they would have used like means to save even a plainer-featured child, and although on parents it devolves as an important and urgent duty, not to doat on infant-beauty, nor to define and determine what will afterwards be the characters and fortunes of their children by the mere distinctions of childish form and face. But beyond the natural attractions of their babe, the parents of Moses saw, or thought they saw, in his graceful or venerable air, a token that he was the destined deliverer of the Hebrew race, or one in whom, in some other way, the promise of Israel's God was to be accomplished; and "by faith they hid him three months, because they perceived he was a proper child."

It may seem as if faith in the promise was more likely to have led them to leave unused the natural means of preserving the child in whom they expected the promise to be fulfilled. And some there are who represent un-
 following such in the pledges and covenant of Heaven, and full assurance on the part of the believer, of his own salvation, as inconsistent with the diligent use of means. But no. No. (1) If God has given promises. He has also

stated the conditions in which they will be fulfilled ; true believers realize both as absolutely true ; and while in the faith of the one they confidently expect their fulfilment, in the faith of the other they earnestly seek to have them realized. (2.) It is in a regenerated heart that evangelical faith exists, and a regenerated heart beats in sympathy with the claims of duty and the laws of Heaven. (3.) Such faith inspires the soul with love to God and love to Jesus, and these principles induce the man to obey the commandments of the one and to imitate the example of the other.

In the case of the parents of Moses, faith led them to take special notice of the surpassing beauty of their child, and, on the other hand, his bodily air and aspect served to strengthen and sustain their faith. And so it is in other instances of this Heaven-born principle. Fancy, indeed, in certain minds, and not least in these modern times, is apt to play wild and foolish freaks among what it takes for signs and omens of certain vast ultimate results. But both in personal experience and in the history of the Church and of the world, signs and omens there actually are of what God, in fulfilment of his pledges, is about to do. It is right and reasonable that Faith should be quick and eager to observe them, and that, in observing them, she should plant her foot more firmly, and sing her songs more cheerfully. This she actually does. Nay, in the many discords of this troubled sphere she can trace the tuning of the harp which is to swell with glorious harmonies, and to awake the world to jubilee.

II. "By faith" the parents of Moses "were not afraid of the king's commandment."

"The king's commandment" required their child to

be put to death. But, in the faith of the promise and covenant of their God, they expected that child to be preserved; and probably, even when they could hide him in their house no longer, and he was committed to the ark of bulrushes on the margin of the flood, they still believed that by the providence of Heaven he would be saved alive. Fear, too, of danger to themselves in consequence of their attempts to preserve their little one, was probably suppressed by the influence of their faith. And faith is still an antidote to fear. In reference to the opposition made to the cause and kingdom of Jehovah, the former principle exclaims:—"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? . . . He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision," (Psalm ii. 1, 4); "God bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought, he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations," (Psalm xxxiii. 10, 11). And in reference to such as may "breathe out threatenings or slaughter" against himself, the believer may say, and has often been enabled so to do:—"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? . . . Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. . . . In the time of trouble, he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock," (Psalm xxvii. 1, 3, 5).

24. *By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25. Choosing*

rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ; 26. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

Ver. 23 exhibits Moses the *infant* in relation to the faith of his parents. These verses exhibit Moses the *man* in relation to his own. The faith of his parents was crowned with a glorious consummation. Not only was their cherished infant saved from threatened death, but he ultimately started on a noble and memorable course.

The child says, 'When I am big, I will do so and so.' Now, the original phrase here rendered "come to years" (*μέγας γενόμενος*) is, literally rendered, *become big*. In the case of Moses, the years of tiny infancy, and the years of blooming boyhood, were passed away. He had now, as a Roman might have said, put on the manly gown. The time was come when he was called to enter on an active course, and to apply the useful lessons he had learned in youth to the pursuits of manly enterprise. And, while his character and conduct as here described, present an example suitable for the various stages of human life, they specially appeal to one particular class—those who are just starting, or called to start, on the active business of the world. What an interesting class! and how great the responsibility under which they lie! "The world is all before them." They are summoned forth to fill the blanks which death and change have made in the Church and Commonwealth. The manly duties for which they have been trained they must now perform. And yet, temptations are thickening on their path; nor, called though they

be to engage, as servants of God and champions of truth, in the honourable enterprise of life, do present health and vigour warrant them to say that, in a few fleeting months or days, they shall not be sleeping in the ice-cold arms of Death. They have now a choice to make, and a business with which to charge themselves. In both respects, Moses is a model. Five things are here affirmed respecting him.

I. When "come to years," he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."

The circumstances in which young Moses was brought into such an intimate relation to the daughter of the Egyptian king are recorded in Exod. ii. The parents, though for three months they continued to hide their child, could no longer, or thought they could not, shelter his infant head. In these circumstances, they resorted to an expedient which may seem scarcely consistent with what parental responsibility required, but which, after all, the supposition of their continued confidence in the promise and providence of Heaven may serve to vindicate. Having prepared an ark of bulrushes, they consigned him to its feeble shelter, and committed it to the margin of the stream. His sister's watchful eyes looked on. But an eye more vigilant than hers beheld him, the eye of the Omniscient—an arm more vigorous than hers defended him, the arm of the Omnipotent. By what man calls *chance*, but Faith calls *providence*, there came a lady to the spot, and she a princess—the very daughter of the king who had doomed the Hebrew little ones to death. He who had guided her footsteps touched her heart; and, at the sight of the infant-beauty and the infant-tears, she was melted into tender sympathy. Guided by the obser-

vant and earnest sister of the child, she consigned him to his own fond mother to be nursed. At length the princess made the pleasant little one her own. "The child grew," says the sacred historian, "and his mother brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses, and she said, Because I drew him out of the water," (Exod ii. 10).

Strange transference from a persecuted Hebrew-home to the palace of the king! A splendid change, no doubt—but one, perhaps, more perilous still than the exposure of the infant to the waters of the Nile. Scripture says but little of his education at the court. It is affirmed, however, by the martyr Stephen (Acts vii. 22), that "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians;" and probably it was by early education that he became so conversant with the Egyptian lore. Whether from very childhood he effectually resisted the temptations which the luxury, the religion, and even the learning of the land involved, we know not. Josephus states that, on one occasion, Pharaoh put the crown of Egypt on the infant's head, but was repulsed by young Moses trampling it beneath his feet. The tale is perhaps a false tradition. But here, at least, inspired authority assures us that, "when he was come to years"—when, as the idea is expressed, Exod. ii. 11, "Moses was grown"—he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."

It need not, and should not, be supposed that it was with proud and supercilious disdain that Moses thus refused. In so far as Pharaoh's daughter was concerned, his heart, no doubt, was warm with gratitude. That spirit of religion by which he was now so remarkably distinguished, while it binds man closely to his God, at

the same time knits him in love and sympathy to man. Gratitude to friends and benefactors is enforced by the suggestions of conscience and the express command of Heaven. And although there was much in the education which Moses had received in Pharaoh's court which his better nature must have disapproved, the kindness and cordiality of her by whom it had been—sometimes, probably, in blind superstition and erring ignorance—bestowed, must have awakened a response of tender emotion in his heart. But the honour of a continued and acknowledged relationship to the Egyptian princess he willingly and courageously renounced. He knew that he was a Hebrew. He perceived that, while he himself was nursed in the lap of Egyptian affluence, his fellows—children of Abraham, and heirs of Canaan—were groaning in Egyptian bondage. And, with a spirit melted into sympathy and fired with moral indignation—with a heart in which patriotism and religion combined their fires into a bright and burning flame—he bade Egypt's court farewell, cast in his lot with Israel, and “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.”

II. In thus refusing, “he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”

The phrase “the people of God” denotes the Hebrew nation. These were the poor and afflicted ones with whom Moses cast in his lot; and to these Jehovah himself applies the name “my people” in that authoritative message to the Egyptian king, “Let my people go, that they may serve me.” They certainly were not all devoted to the service, and faithful to the covenant, of their God. But the Lord had chosen them in the loins

of Abraham—had constituted them the conservatories of true religion—had given them lofty promises—and, even amidst the toils and troubles of their residence in Egypt, regarded them with special interest. Thus, they were the “people of God,” and representatives of that more spiritual and distinguished community to which St. Peter, deriving his descriptive language from what had already, in some sense, been said of ancient Israel, addresses these emphatic and memorable words:—“Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light,” (1 Pet. ii. 9).

But “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” It is so in the case of his believing and obedient people. It was so even in the case of Israel. For not only were they afflicted, in respect both of the oppressions under which they groaned in Egypt, and of the trials through which they steered their way towards Canaan—but God himself, in these monitory words, interprets the nature and design of the sufferings they endured:—“Thou shalt consider in thy heart, that, like as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee,” (Deut. viii. 5). Thus “to suffer affliction” along with them was one of two alternatives presented to the mind of Moses.

The other was, “to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” Egypt, and especially the Egyptian court, was rich in luxurious delights. Such “pleasures” are what the carnal heart desires. And yet, as in the Book of Ecclesiastes is largely shown, they fail to satisfy and fill the soul that in largest measure finds them. Two other properties are here attributed to these earth-born joys.

1. They are "the pleasures of sin."

They are associated, nay, even identified, with disobedience to the law, and resistance to the government, of God. Heaven has interdicted those pursuits of sensuality, ambition, covetousness, and pride, from which these pleasures flow; so that, in attaining them by means of those pursuits, the worldling sins. Heaven has interdicted the pleasures themselves—which, as they spring from bad sources, also lead to bad issues; so that, by tasting of those pleasures, again the worldling sins.

2. They are but "for a season."

In their full swell and current, they are often broken in upon, nay, swept away, by outward circumstances or inward feelings. Disease, or age, or some other subduing or disturbing force, frequently puts a final stop to such enjoyments, even while life still lingers on. And death, with his devastating fingers, lays both the pleasures, and the man who sought and found them, low. Hell follows; and there, O there, sinful pursuits remain, but "the pleasures of sin" are gone, forever gone. Onward, and onward still, the votaries, the victims, of sinful pleasure are gnawed by the deathless worm; and "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever."

And how did Moses choose between the two alternatives? He "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." And this very enunciation of his choice accounts for it. He recognized the afflictions, and affliction, for its own sake, was not what he liked; but he knew and believed that they were the "afflictions of the people of God," and that, as they were dictated by

mercy, so they tended to good. He recognized the "pleasures," and happiness was what, as a man, he sought; but he knew and believed that they were "the pleasures of sin," and that they were but "for a season." And so, while, between the two, the inconsiderate and unbelieving worldling would have chosen the latter, to *him*, the man of serious thought and religious faith, the former were the object of a firm unflinching choice. Thus did Moses choose; and, in doing so, he acted well and wisely. To cast in his lot with Israel involved "afflictions;" but the cause in which these afflictions were endured was a great and noble one—a cause which the faith of the patriarchs, and the promises of God, combined to consecrate—a cause to which Patriotism and Duty called, and which Heaven was pledged to crown with bright and permanent success. To continue in Pharaoh's court, and be enrolled as a denizen of Egypt, would have been a security for "pleasures" such as human nature craves and relishes. But the cause to which this would have committed Moses was an earthly and unhallowed one. And so, in choosing the former cause with its afflictions rather than the latter with its pleasures, he acted a right and reasonable part. But it seems as if he actually chose the afflictions rather than the pleasures; and this, even this, was not only dutiful but wise. The pleasures—what were they? The "pleasures of sin." And how long were they to last? Only "for a season." The afflictions—whence came they? In so far as Moses was concerned, from the hand of paternal mercy. And whither did they tend? To good—to the present safety and eternal glory of him who bore them. "Our light affliction," St. Paul long afterwards declared, "Our

light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; while we look, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal," (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18).

III. In making this choice, Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt."

The understanding does, and should, determine the decision of the will. The choice of Moses was guided, and rightly guided, by the estimate he formed of the contrasted objects. That estimate is indicated by this third proposition of the passage.

Christ himself was pre-eminently the object of reproach. He says to his Father, in one of the prophetic Psalms :—"The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me," (Psalm lxix. 9 ; Rom. xv. 3). During his two successive trials, what insults were heaped on his sacred person, in the form both of words and deeds ! Crucifixion itself involved shame and dishonour of a peculiarly aggravated kind. And when Messiah was suspended on the accursed tree, his ears were filled, and his heart was torn, with contumacious and insolent reproach. A like fate overtook his early followers and friends. And some interpreters suppose that when, in the present passage, the phrase, "the reproach of Christ," is applied to Moses, the sacred writer means—such reproach as Christ and Christians were long afterwards to bear. But the application of the phrase "the reproach of Christ" to Moses and the Israelites, appears to intimate that to Christ they themselves stood in a close and important relation. And considering

that Christ had been revealed, in promise, to the patriarchs—that of Him and his religion the Levitical law was typical—that Moses foretold the advent of the “Prophet like unto himself”—and that the Angel of the Covenant, the Angel with whom Jacob “struggled until break of day” and who “redeemed him from all evil,” the Divine Angel “in whom was Jehovah’s name”—conducted Israel on their desert-path to the promised land; it is surely both natural and reasonable to regard the cause to which Moses committed himself as the cause of Christ, and the reproach which he incurred in maintaining and promoting it as reproach encountered for the sake of Christ, and on account of adherence to the standard of that glorious “Captain of Jehovah’s host.”

On the side of “Egypt,” it is here suggested, there were “treasures.” The land of the Pharaohs was a rich as well as learned land. There, in commerce, in science, or in art, Moses might probably have accumulated wealth; and, as a courtier and a prince, he might have had the treasures of Egypt at his feet. But as, between the afflictions of Israel and the pleasures of the Egyptians, he resolutely chose the former, so, in the comparative estimate of “the treasures in Egypt” and “the reproach of Christ,” he decidedly preferred the latter—not only reckoning the cause of Messiah nobler and better than that of Egyptian worship and pomp and power, but even “esteeming the reproach” of the former “greater riches”—more precious and more desirable—than “the treasures” of the latter. And he was right. These treasures would have been won at the awful cost of principle, and would soon have “taken to themselves wings” and disappeared. That reproach, as

incurred in a noble cause and for the sake of adherence to truth and duty, was itself an honourable prize ; as moral discipline, it had precious uses ; and its fleeting pain was soon to be succeeded by a “ crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

IV. In all this, Moses was moved “ by faith.”

There were certain articles of sacred truth which showed that he had a call, and that he also had encouragement, to adhere to Israel's cause. More especially, the promises vouchsafed by God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob pointed in that direction. These promises of God—these articles of truth—came pressing in upon his soul as prompting and animating motives to renounce Egyptian pleasure and wealth and power, and, for life and death, to cast in his lot with Israel. But how were those motives brought thus practically to bear upon his mind ? By faith. He believed the truths, he “ embraced the promises ;” and so, they exerted their appropriate power. Believing them, he acted under their influence—repudiating what was base, and bad, and fatal, though brightened with sunny and attractive hues—choosing and following what was generous, pure, hopeful, and Divine, though calumny, poverty, and manifold affliction, might overshadow the grandeur of the cause, and the splendour of its ultimate results.

V. In the exercise of this faith, Moses “ had respect unto the recompence of the reward.”

This recompence was one of the objects held forth in the promises of God. Consisting as it did in spiritual privilege on earth and endless glory and felicity in heaven, the religious mind of Moses highly valued it. And secured as it was by the pledge and covenant of Heaven to every faithful Israelite, Moses was well-

assured that it might be won. And thus, fired with aspirations after so magnificent a prize, warmed with gratitude for so sublime a hope, and animated with the prospect of such a desirable result, he sought to be faithful, "faithful unto death."

Be the faith, the choice, the estimate, of Moses ours. We are all naturally the children of Pharaoh's daughter. Worldly tastes and habits and desires monopolize the carnal heart. Base and criminal pursuits—frivolous and unhallowed joys—are what unconverted men, with yearning earnestness, pursue. But Heaven beckons us away, and even if all were sacrifice in yielding to the high behest—if, in complying, and ever afterwards to life's closing hour, unbroken suffering were incurred by the obedient spirit—the very act of obedience, and the very renunciation of the base and bad, would be itself a glorious good. But in renouncing earthly honour, a nobler is attained—in rejecting the pleasures of sin, the peace and joy of religion are secured—in "refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter," the nobler title of, God's own child, is won. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18). True, reproaches and manifold affliction may befall the faithful, and of these much may even result from their fidelity. But surely, as the proverb speaks, 'to suffer is better than to sin.' The very sufferings are tokens of paternal love, and both means and pledges of filial improvement. Over against the trials, there are, even on earth, sweet and sublime felicities. And heaven—O, heaven will make amends for all. Where-

fore, in faith of the promises of God, and in hope of "the great recompence of reward," let us choose as Moses chose, and live as Moses lived—strong, steadfast, faithful, in the cause and covenant of Heaven. Then, if the world should ply us with its wily arts, and, by the bait of power, or pleasure, or renown, or some such seducing appeal to our earthly nature, seek to draw us back to its unhallowed ways, let us manfully reply, 'Get thee behind me, wicked, worthless world'—if "the reproach of Christ" should follow us, let us bind the garland round our brow, and be willing, in such a cause, to suffer shame—and if we should ever have reason to say, "Silver and gold have I none," let us triumphantly exclaim, 'One thing I have not lost, one thing I cannot lose—I have not lost, I cannot lose, my portion: My portion is here, in my immortal spirit—and yonder, in the Everlasting God.'

27. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

Sound religious faith in the regenerated heart is not only practical, but also permanent. And it is beyond all reasonable doubt that the same high and Heaven-born principle by which Moses "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter," and cast in his lot with the reproached and persecuted people of the Lord, both guided and encouraged him in those transactions, so minutely recorded in the Book of Exodus, wherein, at the bidding of his God, he went boldly in to Pharaoh, and told him what the King of kings required him to do, and anon, went kindly to the homes of Israel, and told them what the God of Abraham required them to expect. It is, however, from the closing scenes of his

residence in Egypt that an additional illustration of his faith is here selected. The statement consists of three parts.

I. Moses "forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king."

There were two occasions on which that distinguished counsellor and commander of the Hebrew hosts left the land of Egypt. He did so when he slew the Egyptian who contended with the Israelite, and hid the body in the sand. He also did so, when he led the Hebrews, across the sea, to the Arabian shore. It is the latter, not the former, of these occasions that is here referred to. When, leaving Egypt, Moses fled to Midian, he gave, in so far as is indicated by the Mosaic narrative, no particular manifestation of religious faith; and in reference to that occasion it is expressly said, Exod. ii. 14, 15:—"And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known. Now, when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian." It is, then, not of this earlier departure from Egypt, but of the final Exodus of the Hebrew leader, in company with his multitudinous host—an Exodus resisted by Pharaoh with bitter threats and hot pursuit, but carried out by Moses with the success which a faithful and fearless heart might have been expected to achieve—that it is here affirmed—"he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king."

II. This Moses did "by faith."

When he resolutely and determinately set himself to abandon Egypt, what both prompted, and encouraged, the attempt? The oracles, and especially, the promises, of God. And how were those oracles, how were these

promises, practically and effectually brought to bear upon his mind? By faith. He believed what God had told him about Egypt; he believed what God had said to his patriarchal sires about the inheritance of Canaan; he believed in the promised help of Heaven on the passage from that "house of bondage" to this land of rest; and believing these things, he abandoned Egypt, and entered on his pilgrim-path towards Palestine. With the ear of faith he heard the call, "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest, because it is polluted." With the eye of faith he looked—as afterwards, from the heights of Pisgah—towards the "land that flowed with milk and honey," and even, as is here explicitly declared, "saw Him that is invisible." And so, prompted by the fear and love of that Heavenly King, and animated by the hopes which the persuasion of his guardian care, and the faith of his glorious promise, were fitted to inspire, "he forsook Egypt."

But before him rolled the waters of the sea. And how, with this mighty obstacle frowning on his course, did he venture to proceed? Under the influence, the mighty and majestic influence, of faith. As the eye of the body looked on the vast and, it may be, stormy flood, the eye of the soul beheld the Maker and Monarch of the world; and Faith triumphantly exclaimed:—"The Lord reigneth; he is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself. . . . The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. Thy testimonies are very sure." (Psalm xciii. 1, 3-5.) Believing in the absolute truth of Jehovah's testimonies,

and in the transcendent might and majesty of Jehovah himself, Moses went boldly on in the very face of the surging sea; and his faith was crowned with victory.

But Pharaoh, proud Pharaoh, followed him, even as he had threatened him before. And what sustained the heart of Moses now? Even as he braved the waters of the sea, so, strong in his conquering faith, and trusting in the "Higher than the highest," he braved the monarch too. In the resources of the all-sufficient God, he saw what was able alike to preserve his own threatened life, and to achieve the promised deliverance of the Hebrew race; and believing this, he "set his face like a flint"—he was bold, and fearless, and erect.

III. In the exercise of the faith here specified, and as a source of the magnanimity here described, Moses "saw Him who is invisible."

The invisibility of God, that glorious Object of the faith of Moses, is probably here referred to with a specific reference to the description given of faith, in ver. 1, as "the evidence," or conviction, "of things *not seen*."

In other texts, as well as the present, this property of God is affirmed, and that in express connection with a reference to means by which, after all, He has made himself manifest to man. Thus, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him," (John i. 18); and again, "Christ is the image of the invisible God," (Col. i. 15).

The invisibility of the Divine Being depends on a twofold necessity. A visible display to man, in his present feeble and infirm condition, corresponding to the actual nature and majesty of God, would be fitted

to overpower the faculties of the former, and to lay him prostrate in the dust. But besides, God, being a Spirit, is not an Object of vision, literally so called, at all. True, God, in certain cases, has vouchsafed to indicate his presence and intervention by certain visible signs. But those signs were not God himself. "God is a Spirit," (John iv. 24); and the corporeal organ of the eye, from the essential constitution of nature, cannot, literally speaking, see him. Nay, although it is said of other spiritual beings, "Their angels do always behold the face of their Father who is in heaven," (Matt. xviii. 10), it cannot be of vision, in the strict signification of the word, that the affirmation is made—God being without matter, and angels without eyes.

And yet, to see God is spoken of as an incumbent duty and a distinguished privilege. "As for me," says the Psalmist, "I shall behold thy face in righteousness," (Psalm xvii. 15). "Blessed are the pure in heart," says Christ, "for they shall see God," (Matt. v. 8).

What, then, is this figurative, this virtual, vision of God? To "see God" is to realize who and what He is—to contemplate Him in the exercise of clear, vivid, and comprehensive views of his existence, his character, and his administration.

In this sense, Moses "saw Him who is invisible." By the light of nature, and by express revelation too, God revealed himself to his servant. Moses yielded to the rightful influence of both. Before he left Egypt, he had attained sound and impressive views of that great Being who had held such close communion with his pious fathers, and to himself had oracularly said, "I am that I am;" and in the exercise and application of

these views he habitually lived. "Knowing the Lord," he also "followed on to know him." After the Exodus, he said, "O Lord, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory," (Exod. xxxiii. 18); and in answer to the prayer, Jehovah "made all his goodness pass before him," and read out to him his venerable name—"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious; slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation," (Exod. xxxiii. 19; xxxiv. 5-7). Moses embraced the oracle; and, as heretofore, so still, he pursued his course "as seeing Him who is invisible."

The vision of God is here, if not absolutely identified, at least, very intimately associated with the faith of Moses. And no marvel. For (1.) God, in his being, and attributes, and government, was himself a very principal object contemplated by the faith of Moses; and (2.) Faith in the promises of God, and of God's Oracles in general, essentially depended on faith respecting the Being by whom those promises were made, by whom these oracles were given.

It is said, accordingly, that, "as seeing Him who is invisible," Moses "endured." The original verb (*ἔρασησεν*) means, *was magnanimous*; and, in the present connection, obviously refers to the statement that Moses "forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king." Realizing God; entertaining distinct and confiding conceptions of the Divine Being—the Being who had called him out of Egypt, and given him promises of protection on the way, and of a satisfactory issue at the

last; he fearlessly forsook the land, and then, as afterwards, bravely did and dared—vigorously performed what God required, and courageously endured what God appointed—determined in purpose, firm in resolution, active in effort, bold in enterprise, patient in suffering—moving steadily and triumphantly along, his white and radiant sails unfurled, in the midst of ‘the battle and the breeze.’

There is an Egypt from which we have all been Divinely called to fly. There are also enemies who seek to keep the soul from making her escape, and, after she has crossed the flood and reached the safer and more hospitable shore, to bring her back to thralldom. How may the captive break his bonds? how may the lingerer in Egypt forsake proud Pharaoh’s yoke, and fly from his accursed land? By faith—the faith which hears the trump of jubilee—the faith which realizes “God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself” by the life-blood of his Son. And how may he be prompted and determined never, never, to return? By faith—the practical, permanent, prevailing principle which believes what God declares, and resists the voice which dares to contradict Him. And how may the fear of strong and sturdy foes be checked and overthrown? By faith—by that firm persuasion of the promise, the power, the faithfulness, and the all-sufficiency, of God which prompted an apostle to exclaim:—“If God be for us, who can be against us? . . . I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,” (Rom. viii. 31, 38, 39). Cap-

tive sinners, believe—believe the Gospel—and so, take flight from Egypt. Emancipated souls, believe—believe your Father's messages—and so, “watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.” Children of God who dread the foe or “tremble for the ark,” believe—believe the promises of Heaven—and so, put your coward-fears away, and triumph in your conquering King.

28. Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them.

In this verse the sacred writer speaks of a night much to be remembered in the history of ancient Israel. The occasion is described in Exod. xii.

Plagues, manifold and mighty, had passed, in quick and terrible succession, over Egypt and its obstinate and rebellious king. And now, the most dreadful of all the plagues befell them. At midnight, Jehovah, armed with terrors, marched through Egypt, and, as if by one fell blow, consigned to the arms of death the first-born of all its families. And so, like the rushing of many waters—like the wild and stormy sea, when it cannot rest—“there was a great cry throughout all the land.” But the Lord, as Moses speaks, “put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.” As there was light in Goshen when there was darkness over all the land beside, so now, when the first-born of the Egyptians were to be slain, the first-born of the Hebrews were to be preserved. And, partly as a token to the angel of destruction, and a pledge to the Israelites themselves, that their habitations were to be passed by in that night of double darkness, and partly as an occasion of

celebrating the great deliverance then vouchsafed to the chosen and cherished race, God, on the eve of the impending devastation, prescribed "the passover and the sprinkling of blood."

Five things, on this occasion, He required Moses and the Israelites to do. (1.) An unblemished lamb was to be chosen, for each of their families, from the flock. (2.) This unblemished and selected lamb was to be separated from the rest of the flock for four days. (3.) On the fourth day after its separation, it was to be slain, and that in bloody sacrifice—according to the phrase, "the sacrifice of the Lord's passover." (4.) On the slain lamb, roasted with fire, the family was to feast; using along with it unleavened bread and bitter herbs, and participating of the sacred meal in the attitude and aspect of persons ready to enter on a journey—with girded loins, and sandaled feet, and pilgrim-staves. (5.) The blood of the lamb was to be sprinkled, and that, apparently, even before the flesh was eaten, on the door-posts and upper lintel of the house—an arrangement by which, some old divines have remarked, the dwelling would bear, in bloody stains, the first letter of the Hebrew word for *life*.

In the old Jewish work called the Mishna, the passover is represented as typical of something to transpire at the advent of Messiah. Among the Christian Fathers, it was considered typical of the sacrifice of Christ, the redemption of the sinner, and the nourishment of the soul; and one of them more especially, Cyril of Alexandria, traces a resemblance in a variety of minute particulars. Nor can there be any reasonable doubt that this interesting and striking institution had really a reference to Christ. That between the two

cases there is an actual and manifold analogy is clear. The passover, as instituted on the eve of the Exodus from Egypt, bears a remarkable resemblance to certain of the most characteristic elements of the Levitical Economy—an Economy of which it is declared, chapt. x. 1, that it “had a shadow of good things to come.” Nay, the Passover was incorporated into that Economy, and was, during the existence of the Hebrew Commonwealth, one of the most sacred elements of the ceremonial law. St. Paul, too, thus minutely and strikingly compares the paschal-victim and the paschal-feast with glorious counterparts in the Economy of the Gospel:—“Even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth,” (1 Cor. v. 7, 8).

Between the two cases—the typical and the anti-typical—there exist, more especially, the following points of analogy.—An unblemished lamb was to be chosen. “He is led,” says the Prophet, “as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth,” (Isa. liii. 7). “Behold,” says the Baptist, “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” (John i. 29). “Ye were redeemed,” says St. Peter, “by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,” (1 Pet. i. 18, 19). And how often, in the Apocalypse, is Messiah called a Lamb!—The Paschal-lamb was to be separated for four days from the flock to which it belonged. Not only was Jesus “an alien from his brethren,” and, in the whole course and tenor of his life, “separate from sinners;” but, four days before his

death, He entered Jerusalem, as if setting himself apart to suffering and death, so as to be able to say, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth." The selected and separated lamb was to die, and to die in sacrifice. "Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us," (1 Cor. v. 7); and it was at the time of the paschal feast—at the very time when the paschal lambs were put to death—that Jesus hung, naked and bleeding, on the cross.—The blood of the lamb was to be sprinkled on the habitations—on the lintel and door-posts—of the Hebrews. Even so, the blood of Christ must be sprinkled on the lintel and door-posts of the soul—must be applied to man for the pardon of his sins, the sanctification of his heart, and the pacification of his conscience; and, as under the Levitical law "the vessels of the ministry," and "the book of the covenant," were to be sprinkled with the sacrificial blood, so on the sprinkling of the blood of Christ the sacraments of the Church, the various services of the sanctuary, and even the Gospel of God's grace, depend for their validity and power.—The flesh of the paschal lamb was to be eaten by the Israelites, in the attitude and aspect of travellers, and that along with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. And so, as travellers to Sion, "with their faces thitherward," the followers of Christ, having cast away "the old leaven, even the leaven of malice and wickedness," must "eat bread and drink wine" in commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ, and, in doing so, yea, in the whole course and tenor of their lives, with penitent and contrite, and yet believing and happy, hearts, must "eat Christ's flesh and drink his blood"—that flesh which "is meat indeed," that blood which "is drink indeed"—so as to

realize the glorious privilege, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst." Even in what may seem subordinate particulars connected with the paschal ceremonial, there may have been a typical reference to Christ. Thus, as the prescription of the Levitical law that "not a bone of" the paschal-lamb should "be broken" was, as an evangelist tells us, fulfilled in the circumstances of Messiah's death, (John xix. 36), so, probably, the prescription given in the original institution of the passover, that the selected lamb was to be "a male of the first year," foreshadowed the fact, that it was in the mid-time of his days, in the very flush of early manhood, that "Messiah was cut off."

"The passover and the sprinkling of blood" the sacred writer tells us that Moses "kept," and that this he did "through faith." (1.) He was induced to observe them by believing, on the one hand, the dangers which God had threatened to bring on the families of Egypt, and, on the other, the deliverance which, if the paschal institution should be faithfully complied with, was secured, by promise, to the Hebrews—a view which is not only warranted by the nature of the case, but also indicated in the words, "lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them." (2.) Although there is no sufficient reason to believe that even Moses thoroughly understood the whole typical import of "the passover and the sprinkling of blood," and although in certain of the types as, according to St. Peter (1 Epistle i. 12), in certain of the prophecies, much was meant, rather for *us*, than for those *by* whom and *to* whom it was originally given; yet, considering that the paschal ceremonial was so rich in symbolic representations of

Christ and Christianity, that God held such special intercourse with Moses, and that, as Abraham had seen, with joy, the days of Messiah from afar, so Moses foretold to Israel that from the midst of them should arise a Prophet like unto himself, it is probable that he, in some degree, recognized, and, by faith, embraced, the typical meaning of "the passover and the sprinkling of blood."

For *us*, too, there is a "sprinkling of blood;" for *us*, too, there is a "passover;" and both of them must be kept "through faith." The Lamb of sacrifice has bled—the Christ of God has died—there has been "opened" "for sin and uncleanness" 'a fountain filled with blood.' But the sacrifice must be applied—the Christ must be embraced—the blood must be sprinkled on the sinner's soul. And how? By the instrumentality of faith—by believing in Christ, the Son of God and the Son of man, the crucified Victim of human sin and yet the glorified "Lord of all." Thus must "the sprinkling of blood" be kept. And sinners, sprinkled with that blood to the justification of their persons and the purification of their souls, must forthwith "keep the passover"—must faithfully observe the sacramental feast at which Jesus meets his own, and at which *they*, on *their* part, testify the love, the mighty love, which He has shown towards *them*, and the love, the honest though imperfect love, which they bear towards *Him*, and must, moreover, keep, in celebration of his worthy praise, and for the sustentation and refreshment of their own souls, a perpetual feast—living by faith on the Son of God—receiving into their hearts the virtue of his death, and "the power of his resurrection" too—holding sweet and sublime communion with that immutable Friend

and Elder-Brother of their souls—"tasting and seeing that" He "is gracious"—rejoicing in the dignity of his person, the virtue of his cross, the generosity of his heart, the fulness of his grace, the grandeur of his reign, the exstasy of his presence—and ascribing "blessing and honour, and glory, and praise, to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb that was slain."

29. *By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land ; which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.*

The Exodus of Israel from Egypt, and their passage through the Red sea, have been subjects of earnest interest and study to various classes of persons.

Some, in their desire to get quit of miracles, have sought to account for the passage through the sea by natural causes. For example, certain speculative inquirers have held that the waters were congealed, so as to admit of the Israelites walking across, and that afterwards, the ice breaking up, the Egyptians were drowned. But (1.) Moses, an eye-witness and an inspired ambassador of Heaven, never hints at such an explanation of the matter ; (2.) The narrative, Exod. xiv. 21-31, gives an entirely different account of it—representing the liquid waters rising as walls on either side and making a dry passage between for the advancing host of Israel ; (3.) In the present text, it is affirmed that they "passed *through* the sea, as on dry land ;" (4.) Both in Exodus, and in other parts of Scripture, the work is attributed to a remarkable, and even supernatural, intervention of Divine Providence ; (5.) Even if this one miracle were banished, a multitude of others would remain.

Many geographers have made Israel's passage through the sea the subject of careful observation and earnest

inquiry, with a view to determine the particular place at which the passage was effected. It is no wonder that this illustrious event should associate even with a geographical question a sacred interest; and it is pleasant to know that the inquiry has, by so many learned, intelligent, and earnest minds, been pursued in a spirit so serious and devout.

To the Hebrew Church, this wondrous fact in their national history—a fact connected alike with the sorrows and the joys of Israel—has been a subject of transcendent interest; and some of the finest passages in the Jewish Scriptures are commemorations of this signal interposition of Israel's God. As they stood securely on the Arabian shore, and saw the dead bodies of their enemies floating on the waters, Moses and the people, in strains 'beyond all Greek, beyond all Roman fame,' sang thus unto the Lord:—"Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power; thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee; thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them, they sank as lead in the mighty waters," (Exod. xv. 6-10). In the Book of Psalms, how frequently, and how finely, are the same events described! Thus, Psalm lxvi. 6:—"He turned the sea into dry land; they went through

the flood on foot; there did we rejoice in him;" Psalm lxxvii. 14-16, 19, 20:—"Thou art the God that doest wonders; thou hast declared thy strength among the people. Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid; the depths also were troubled. . . . Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron;" Psalm cxiv. 1-3:—"When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion. The sea saw it, and fled; Jordan was driven back." And from the prophets here is one pathetic and sublime representation of the Divine conduct of Israel through the waters of the sea:—"Then He remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying, Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? where is He that put his Holy Spirit within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest; so didst Thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name," (Isa. lxiii. 11-14).

And very interesting to the Christian are Israel's Exodus from Egypt and passage through the sea. He finds in them bright manifestations of the majesty of God. He sees in them striking emblems of a nobler redemption—a more momentous deliverance. And here

we are brought to trace even these historical events to faith—such faith as, in the face of difficulties, and in the very midst of dangers, we are called to entertain.

But it is intimated, Exod. xiv. 10-12, that, with the waters before them and the enemy behind them, the Israelites were "sore afraid." How, then, did they march through the sea "by faith?" The remainder of that chapter furnishes an answer. Moses, in the name of the Lord, assured them of the destruction of their enemies and of "the salvation of the Lord." Moreover, the Pillar-cloud went round, and stood between Israel and their pursuers—"as if," remarks Bishop Hall, (*Con-templat.*) "God would have said, They shall first overcome me, O Israel, ere they touch thee." And finally, on reaching the margin of the sea, Moses "stretched out his hand," and "the waters were divided." Thus, probably, were the Hebrews freed from fear, and fortified by faith.

Yet St. Paul says, 1 Cor. x. 1-5, that, although "all were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea," "with many of them God was not well pleased," and these "were overthrown in the wilderness." How, then, are the Israelites who crossed the sea represented in the present text as possessing faith? Such faith as many of them had was, by no means, such as could justify their souls. There are certain religious truths which an irregenerate person may believe, while failing to believe those articles of faith which constitute the Gospel. Such a distinction is common now, and such a distinction may have been realized among ancient Israel.

Ours be the nobler faith. Ours be the faith which embraces Christ, and rests in the promises as "yea and

amen in *Him*." So shall we safely cross the flood, and as for those formidable foes, our own sins, God will "cast them behind his back" and drown them "in the depths of the seas." Bondsman of Egypt, "go forward," and, passing by faith the mighty gulf, the surging deep, that severs thee from the land of safety, hie thee to the farther shore, and be the Lord's own freeman. Traveller to Zion, "go forward," and if seas of difficulty and trial should beset the path along which thy Father beckons thee, face them with the keen eye, and pass them with the firm foot, of living faith; and so, in the experience of his care, exclaim, "The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth king forever. The Lord will give strength unto his people, the Lord will bless his people with peace," (Psalm xxix. 10, 11)—and having received an answer to thy prayer, "Let not the waterfloods overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up," and having been brought to safe and peaceful rest as Israel to Elim, "where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm-trees," (Exod. xv. 27), sing, I "went through fire and through water, but thou broughtest" me "out into a wealthy place," and acknowledge that Heaven has been faithful to his pledge, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the floods they shall not overflow thee," (Isa. xliii. 2). There is one final flood to cross—a dark stream, a surging and, it may be, stormy sea. But even to that thy Father's promises extend, and even there his paternal power and providence are felt. Yes, and on the farther shore there is a brighter land than 'Araby the blest'—a "better country" than that which "flowed with milk and honey." O happy they who "stand on its sea of glass,

having the harps of God, and sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb!" Even on an earthly shore the saint can "sing the song" which Moses sang on the margin of the sea—evangelizing that sublime commemoration of a temporal deliverance—turning it all to "glorious Gospel." But in sweeter, richer, loftier music will the strain be sung amidst the fragrant sweets of Paradise and within the golden gates of the New Jerusalem.

30. *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.*

The destruction of Jericho, here referred to in connection with the power of faith, is copiously recorded in the 6th chapter of Joshua. From the fact that it was compassed by the hosts of Israel seven times in a single day it may be reasonably inferred that, in respect of extent, it was of no very considerable size. The spies, however, whom Moses sent to search the land reported that the cities were "walled and very great," (Numb. xiii. 28, 29); and it appears from Joshua vi. 1 that careful provision had been made for the defence of Jericho and its inhabitants from the attacks of Israel. O that like precautions were always taken with respect to the city of the soul! Were we thus vigilantly and earnestly to stop the passages, and bar the gates, and man the walls, we should have less reason than we often have to deplore the triumphs of the formidable foe. But what can walls and bolts and battlements avail when Jehovah, Lord of hosts, rises up to judgment, and "whets his glittering sword?" "See," said the Lord to Joshua, "I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour."

And so, though Jericho's foundations had been deep as the centre of the earth, its walls uplifted beyond the eagle's flight, and its inhabitants secured against all conceivable appliances of art, its fate would have been sure—its doom would have been dread. And now, its hour of destiny was come:—"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."

I. The means employed:—it was "compassed about seven days."

Intelligent readers of the Bible must have remarked the frequent use of the number seven in the phraseology of Scripture and in the providence of God. On the present occasion, for example, there were seven priests, seven trumpets, seven days, and, on the seventh, seven circuits of the city. Seven is reckoned by the Jews the sacred and perfect number—and obviously, not without reason. This use of the number probably originated in the appropriation by God, at the creation, of six days—the first six to his successive works, and the seventh to his glorious Sabbatic rest. In the case of the siege of Jericho, the number in question, as applied to such a variety of objects, denotes completeness in each.

But, although seven may denote completeness, most incomplete and inadequate would have seemed to the eye of nature the provision made for the overthrow of Jericho. No mount was raised, no mine was sunk, no sword was drawn—or, if any such appliances were used at first, they were suspended and set aside by the ordinance of God. And what was that ordinance? what was to be done for the destruction of the city? On six successive days, the host of Israel was to com-

pass round its walls. On the seventh, they were to do so seven times. At each of the circuits, seven priests, bearing the ark of the covenant, were to blow seven trumpets of ram's horns. And at the termination of the last, the people were to raise a unanimous shout—whereupon the walls of the city were to fall. One can easily conceive that the inhabitants of Jericho would laugh to scorn appliances like these. 'Must these experienced travellers,' might they say, 'continue to travel still, instead of taking up arms to fight? And if trumpets be the order of the day, *we* have trumpets equal to their ram's horns, and could blow as loud a blast as they.' But, after all, the means were effectual—and they were appropriate too. The people, in compassing the walls, were trained to patience and expectancy; and, by the intervention of the ark, the power of God was visible in the ultimate result.

II. And what was the result?—"The walls of Jericho fell down."

It was, obviously, not a mere breach in the city-walls that was effected. The walls, according to the present statement—as amplified and explained in the 6th chapter of Joshua—fell flat, or at least rushed into general ruin. And so, the men of Israel could enter the city, whatever particular point they occupied, and take their part in the devastating work within. An awful work! The reference in the present text requires not that it should be here described. But assuredly, it manifests the purity, the righteousness, "the terrors of the Lord;" and, taken in connection with the description given of the men of Jericho in ver. 31—"them that believed not"—may serve to remind us that unbelief is the crowning sin and draws wrath and ruin on the soul.

III. The result specified is traced to a certain principle:—"by faith."

That all the Israelites believed to the justification of their persons and the salvation of their souls cannot be supposed. But yet, they *did* believe what God had told them of the fall of Jericho, and of the means by which the end was to be gained. In so far, God was pleased with what they did; and their faith prompted and encouraged them to use the means prescribed—means which, though feeble in themselves, were crowned with such remarkable success.

Even so, in the face of obstacles, and in the use of means—albeit strange, and, to nature's estimate, inadequate and inappropriate means—let *us* believe. Even yet, in the presence of faith, the walls of Jericho fall down. "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain," (Zech. iv. 7).

31. *By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.*

The story of Rahab is recorded in the 2d and 6th chapters of Joshua. In the former, she appears "receiving the" Hebrew "spies with peace." In the latter, she is exhibited as escaping the impending danger when "the walls of Jericho fell down," and its guilty people were destroyed. Her faith—referred to in the present verse—is also specified by St. James; who associates her as a believer with him who, by the strength and vigour of his faith, won for himself the honourable names of "the father of believers" and "the friend of God," (James ii. 25).

And yet, she is here called "*Rahab the harlot.*" It is not to be supposed, however, that she continued in

habits of incontinence after she believed. If she was a regenerate woman — as she probably was — she had ceased to be the votary of sense and sin. From like corruption, and in spite of it, how many have been saved by the sovereign and victorious grace of Heaven ! Manasseh was a necromancer ; Paul, a persecutor ; she who anointed the Redeemer's feet, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, " a sinner." " And such were some of you," says St. Paul, speaking of persons who practised certain of the grossest vices, " but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," (1 Cor. vi. 11).

Rahab gives expression to her faith, Joshua ii. 9-11. " I know," says she to the Hebrew spies, " that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt ; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you ; for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath."

Under the influence of such faith, she " received the spies with peace." First, she bade them welcome to her house. Then, when danger impended over them, she took them to the roof and hid them among the flax—flax, says Bishop Hall (*Contemplat.*), " of which she hath woven an everlasting web." And finally, she let them down by a window, that they might escape the enemy.

By faith, too, when her own hour of danger came—when Jericho and its inhabitants were destroyed—she “perished not with them that believed not.” Their unbelief was absent from her heart; and their ruin laid not low her head. She, and, in answer to her remonstrance, her family, escaped. A red cord marked the dwelling of her cherished relatives; and as, when he saw the blood on the door-posts and lintels of the Hebrews, the angel of destruction passed their houses by, so, when this red flag was seen, the house where it was displayed escaped. And as for Rahab, not only was her life preserved, but she became a settler among the Israelites, and, marrying a Hebrew noble, was an honoured ancestor of Christ.

Her faith, and *her* felicity, be ours. Believing what God says, let us cast in our lot with the blessed commonwealth of saints, resolving, like Ruth and Rahab:—“Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.” Realizing, in the exercise of faith, the authority and the tender-mercy of our God, “let us do good, as we have opportunity, to all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith.” And beholding the blood of atoning sacrifice, and the grace which has provided it for a guilty and ruined race, let us prize the sacred banner of the cross, and clinging ourselves, bid others cling, to “the red cord” which Christ displays on the atoning tree—which God lets down from the lofty heaven.

32. *And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.*

The lives of Barak, Gideon, Jephtha, and Samson are narrated in the Book of Judges. That Book is apt to be disparaged and neglected. It records, indeed, so many 'hairbreadth escapes' and chivalrous adventures that by young and enthusiastic minds it is often read with interest. But there is, perhaps, no Book of the Bible to which persons in quest of edification and refreshment to their souls resort less frequently. The rude manners which it unfolds, and the bloody deeds which it narrates, account, in some degree, for this state of things. Nevertheless, the Book of Judges is "given by inspiration of God," and is well-fitted to be "profitable." The very sins which it records, and in some cases copiously records—such as the distrust of Providence by Gideon, the rashness of Jephtha in making a solemn promise, and the sensuality and facility of Samson—being sins of human nature, are fitted to admonish us of danger to ourselves. The deeds of battle and of victory in which the narrative abounds were evolutions of God's moral Providence, and indicate his feelings and his purposes with respect both to Israel and their enemies—hence, the war-cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." We are taught that we have all a moral warfare to pursue, and a spiritual conquest to achieve; and it requires but a little pious ingenuity to trace a practical parallelism between these and the battles and triumphs of the Hebrew Judges. And finally, the sacred writer, in the present passage, attributes some, at least, of their heroic and successful deeds to faith—such faith as we ourselves, in imitation of their example, are required and encouraged to maintain.

The lives of Samuel and David are beautifully intertwined. That of the former and a great part of that

of the latter are recorded in the two Books of Samuel. With respect to David, however, many particulars are added in First Kings and First Chronicles. Both of these great and good men were remarkable examples of faith leading to great results; and in this, as in other views, the records of their lives are fraught with interest. Samuel—how beautiful his childhood, as, “girt with a linen ephod,” he ministered before the Lord in Shiloh! how dignified his manhood, as he went in and out, executing judgment and justice in the land! how venerable his age, as, looking backwards on the past and forward to the future, he laid him down and died! And David—how remarkable a man was *he!* and how practical a faith was *his.* David, the shepherd-boy of Bethlehem—David, the young conqueror of the vaunting Philistine—David, the skilful minstrel of the palace—David, the persecuted fugitive from Saul—David, the valiant victor of the foes of Israel—David, the anointed king of Palestine—David, the “sweet singer” of sacred and sublimest songs—David, the affectionate father and the faithful friend—and David, the sinner, indeed, the great and grievous sinner, but also the prayerful and prostrate penitent—how many a precious lesson does he teach, by his acts and his experiences, in all these various characters! and how manifestly was he one who triumphed by his faith!

Of “the prophets,” some are exhibited historically in the Books of Kings and Chronicles, such as Elijah and Elisha; and others, such as Daniel and Jeremiah, are prominently presented in the Prophetic Books which bear their names. To faith are to be traced their courage in reproofing the transgressions of the past,

their patience in enduring the trials of the present, and their confidence in foretelling the scenes and transactions of the future.

33. Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34. Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the army of the aliens.

Of course, it is not meant, that all these particular manifestations and triumphs of faith were realized in each of the persons spoken of in ver. 32. The different descriptive classes fall to be distributed among the different individuals, according to the corresponding facts in their respective histories.

When Joshua conquered Canaan, and David conquered neighbouring lands, they "subdued kingdoms." The expression, "wrought righteousness," was fulfilled when such judges as Samuel, and such kings as David, executed justice and judgment among those committed to their charge; and in a still more comprehensive sense when the pious ancients meekly and diligently discharged the duties prescribed by Heaven's righteous law. When God promised good things to Joshua, Gideon, David, and other ancients, and by faith they appropriated the Divine pledges; and also, though in a somewhat different sense, when the good things promised were bestowed; they "obtained promises." When Samson rent in pieces the roaring lion, (Judges xiv. 5, 6), when David "slew both the lion and the bear," (1 Sam. xvii. 34-37), and when Daniel lay unscathed in the lions' den, (Dan. vi. 22), they "stopped the mouths of lions." Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, when

they walked unhurt in the fiery furnace, “quenched the violence of fire,” (Dan. iii. 19-27). When David hid himself from Saul, and Elijah fled from Jezebel, (1 Sam.; 1 Kings xix. 3), they “escaped the edge”—literally, the mouths (*στόματα*)—“of the sword.” When Hezekiah recovered from his sickness, and his life was prolonged, (Isa. xxxviii. 5, 21), “out of weakness” he was “made strong.” “Waxed valiant in fight” was verified in Joshua, Barak, Jephtha, David, and many other Hebrew heroes. So also was the expression, “turned to flight the armies of the aliens”—a description which was signally realized, for instance, in the case of Barak, when having gone forth to war under the auspices and guidance of the prophetess who “dwelt beneath the palm-tree,” he climbed the heights of Tabor, and thence descending with his chosen band, beheld the hostile multitudes scattered to the winds, (Judges iv. 4-17.) An occasion this that may serve, as if with a loud and lofty war-cry, to stir and animate the heart! Let these words of Deborah and Barak warn our souls against unbelieving cowardice, and prompt and stir them to vigorous faith and manly enterprise, in those scenes of religious life which are the nobler and milder counterparts of Israel’s olden battle-fields:—“My heart is toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people. . . . Why abodest thou among the sheep-folds to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. . . . Zebulon and Naphtali were a people that jeopardated their lives unto the death in the high places of the field. . . . Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the

Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty," (Josh. v. 9, 16, 18, 23).

35. *Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.*

In the former part of this verse, the sacred writer, probably, refers to the widow of Zarephath, whose son was restored to life by Elijah, (1 Kings xvii. 17-24), and to the woman of Shunem whose son was, in like manner, restored by Elisha, (2 Kings iv. 18-37). It has been supposed that it is here meant to attribute these revivals to the faith of the prophets. But the expression, "Women *received* their dead raised to life again"—literally received their dead out of a resurrection (ἐξ ἀναστάσεως)—indicates that faith on the part of the women themselves is meant.

The other examples specified in this verse seems to be that of Eleazar, and that of the mother and her seven sons, both described in 2 Maccabees. These were splendid examples of religious faith and constancy, and, though recorded in an uncanonical book, might well, if authentic, be specified and recommended by an inspired writer. They "were tortured" (ἐτυμπανίσθησαν, a remarkable and somewhat difficult word) is a vivid representation of the sufferings which these pious Maccabees endured. "Not accepting deliverance," is expressive of their moral superiority to the efforts made to shake their constancy. And the expression, "that they might obtain a better resurrection"—in which the epithet "better" contradistinguishes the resurrection spoken of from that experienced by the sons of the women of Zarephath and Shunem—indicates that the doctrine of a

glorious resurrection was known to these pious ancients, and represents the prospect of it as a prompting and animating motive in their breasts. And shall not Christian believers, fired by like prospects, maintain like fidelity? Well may the faith of Christ, and the hope of glory, inspire them to do and dare—to labour boldly, and to suffer bravely—in the noblest and best of causes.

36. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented: 38. (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

Here the sacred writer (1.) Minutely describes certain of the sufferings which pious ancients had endured—sufferings such, in variety and intensity, as other faithful servants of God have, in later times, been called to encounter; (2.) Virtually attributes to faith on the part of these moral heroes, their voluntary subjection to such sufferings, and their patient endurance under them;—and (3.) Declares of these olden saints that “the world was not worthy” of them—a representation which stands as an antithesis to the fact that the world “rejected and despised,” persecuted and slew, them, and which indicates that in this matter the world was greatly guilty, and that its pious victims possessed an honour such as *it* could neither give nor take away.

39. And these all, having obtained a good report through

faith, received not the promise: 40. God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

The expression "These all" refers, not exclusively to the judges, prophets, kings, and other believers, specified in the verses immediately preceding, but comprehensively, to the whole array of "elders" (ver. 2) spoken of in the previous part of the chapter. This appears from a combination of particulars. (1.) It was certainly natural and reasonable that the sacred writer, in bringing his extended sketch of distinguished persons to a conclusion, should cast a retrospective glance on the complete series. (2.) What in ver. 39 is said about those denoted by the phrase "These all"—that they "obtained a good report through faith"—is, in ver. 2, at the beginning of the list, applied to those whom he there proceeds to enumerate:—"By it"—by faith—"the elders obtained a good report." (3.) The idea in ver. 39, "received not the promise," is, in ver. 13, applied to Abraham and other patriarchs. (4.) In ver. 39, 40, a contrast is, obviously, drawn between the Economy of the Gospel and a state of things which was realized throughout the interval between the sacrifice of Abel and the advent of Christ.

I. It is here affirmed of the persons specified, that they "obtained a good report through faith."

And how truly have the words been realized! In the days of their earthly pilgrimage, God himself, by oracular words, or by the marked benediction which rested on their aims and efforts, commended their faith, and the deeds which it led them to achieve. In "the volume of the Book," He has inscribed their names, and chronicled their works, as on tablets of eternal brass.

Their ancient achievements 'echo along the corridors of time.' And, from age to age, the Church delights to make mention of their faith, and to do honour to their names.

II. It is added, that nevertheless, while they sojourned here, they "received not the promise."

Some interpreters understand to be meant, the promise of eternal life; and on this text is founded the Romish doctrine of the Limbo of the Fathers, that is, the dogma that pious persons who died before Christ's resurrection were kept until then in a certain imperfect preliminary state. But, although it is true that "Christ hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel," yet scattered through the Old Testament there are texts—such as that, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory," (Psalm lxxiii. 24),—which indicate that God had promised future blessedness to believers of these earlier ages, and that, when pious spirits then departed, they went to a state of glory; and besides, "the promise," as associated with these believing ancients, naturally means, the promise, the oft-repeated and animating promise, of Messiah. Now, not only was such a promise given to the early Church, but its faithful members believed it, and, on the ground of it, looked forward to Messiah's day. But its accomplishment they lived not long enough to see. It was not theirs, "beholding Jesus as he walked," to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God!" It was not theirs, like Simeon, to take the infant-Saviour in their arms, and say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

III. This state of things is here explained, and

accounted for, by the supplementary remark :—“ God hath provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

Here, as elsewhere, it is indicated that the Patriarchal and Mosaic Economies were inferior to the Dispensation of the Gospel. Although towards this the others pointed, yet the crown, the consummation, the full and clear development, were reserved for the period ushered in by the birth, the sacrifice, and the glorification of the promised Christ. But now, “the kingdom of God,” “the kingdom of heaven,” is come. Its denizens on earth have higher privileges than their patriarchal and Jewish sires possessed “in the days of their pilgrimage.” To that kingdom, however, the pious of the earlier ages now belong. They stand in an intimate personal relation to the Mediatorial Son, to the embodied God, as well as those believers who were born after He had trodden with his sacred foot this earthly soil. The time of *perfection* for the one class as well as the other has now arrived. “Many,” says Christ himself, “shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven;” and again—O monitory words!—“There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.” (Matt. viii. 11; Luke xiii. 28.)

Knowing that “of those to whom much is given much also will be required,” let us, not only highly value, but also diligently use, the superior privileges in these later ages of the world vouchsafed. And though our names may never be emblazoned on the pages of the Bible, so let us emulate and imitate the faith of earth’s

earlier saints, and of others following in their train, as to have the sweet and sublime assurance that they are written "in the Lamb's book of life." O happy they who, living, prompt, and guide, and animate, by their pious counsel and their bright example, a multitude of souls, and, dying, leave such memories behind as prompt, and guide, and animate them still!

CHAPTER XII.

1. *Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,* 2. *Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

In the classic land of Greece—which was known to many of the Jews as well as Gentiles who lived in the neighbourhood of the seas that washed its shores, and in which St. Paul himself was called to minister—certain public games were regularly observed. One of the principal places where such were celebrated was that famous isthmus on which Corinth—a town familiar to that apostle—stood; hence the name of *Isthmian Games*. Although, as St. Paul suggests, (1 Cor. ix. 25), it was "for a corruptible crown" that the heroes of these classic contests strove, yet it was with eager and earnest hearts that many of them engaged in the strenuous enterprise. The occasion attracted multitudes of spectators from the

surrounding provinces; and the eager efforts, and the honourable triumphs, formed the theme of lofty and animating song. It is no wonder, then, that in so figurative a book as the New Testament, these ancient games should be frequently referred to, in connection with such sacred subjects as they were obviously well-fitted to illustrate; and if like exercises of strength and skill had been introduced into Palestine—as there is some reason for believing to have been the case—it is the more intelligible how St. Paul should figuratively apply the ideas of a wrestle and a race. This he actually does, 1 Cor. ix. 24-27; Eph. vi. 12; Philip. iii. 13, 14; 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. A like reference occurs in the present passage—in which the preparations made by the combatants in the public race, the multitude of spectators that surrounded the arena, the judge who presided over the scene and dispensed the prize, and the eager efforts and persevering constancy with which the successful racer hastened towards the goal, seem all alluded to.

In the New Testament it is customary to bring historical details and doctrinal illustrations directly to bear on the enforcement of Christian duty. This is done in the present case by the connective word “Wherefore;” and the import and reference of that word are forthwith explained by the phrase, “seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.” In the course of the passage, the sacred writer propounds a fact, indicates a practical reference of that fact, and prescribes a corresponding duty.

I. He propounds a fact:—“We are compassed about,” says he, “with a great cloud of witnesses.”

In ancient writers a multitude is denoted by the

figure of a *cloud*. Homer speaks of a *cloud of infantry* (*νέφος πρῆξιαν*, *Il.* 4); and Livy, of a *cloud of horse and foot* (*peditum equitumque nubes*). Close conglomeration and large extent are two principal points of view in which a multitude corresponds to a cloud. It is obviously in this sense that the word is employed in the present text. And the fact that the "witnesses" referred to comprehend all whose names are specified, or whose deeds and trials are described, in the preceding chapter, and that, in the march of time, new witnesses are being added to the noble throng, renders the figure strikingly appropriate.

The word *witnesses* sometimes denotes *persons looking on*; and in this sense, it would with special strictness correspond to the circumstance, obviously referred to, of the arena in the ancient games being surrounded by numerous spectators. Nor, assuredly, is it inconceivable that the departed spirits of the just are cognizant, to some extent, of what is going on in this nether world. For aught that we can tell, the white-robed sons of immortality observe, with interest, the struggle in which the mortal denizens of earth are still engaged; and perhaps each takes special notice of how his own surviving friends conduct themselves on that great arena where heaven is lost or won. The very idea that it may be so is fitted to prompt the efforts of the slothful and to animate the spirit of the true. O, then, how arresting, how solemnizing, and to the faithful how delightful, should it be to know—as with absolute certainty we may—that one Eye, the Eye of eyes, the Eye of "Him with whom we have to do," is perpetually looking on, and marking, not only the actions of our lives, but the secrets of our souls!

But the word *witnesses* often means, *persons who bear testimony*. And in this sense, the great and good of whom the sacred writer has been discoursing realize the name. They, "being dead, yet speak." They bear witness to the power of faith, and to the truth of the promises of God. By their recorded history and experience, they still teach these sacred lessons to the world. Thus, like the spectators in the ancient games, they warn and encourage the racer as he prosecutes his course.

With the "cloud of witnesses" Christians are here represented as "compassed about." The follower of Christ has his place, as it were, in the centre of the Bible; and so, the bright examples which that Book records are mustered round him in glorious array. Running, or summoned to run, the race, he is encircled, as if by a mighty cloud, such as, in mountainous regions more especially, one may sometimes see encompassing, with its fleecy shade or its sunny splendour, the scene where the traveller prosecutes his course—or rather, for that is the more specific image of the text, by a vast concourse of spectators gathered around the arena where a glorious prize is to be lost or won. We have entered, as it were, a gallery of ancestral portraitures, from whose walls the great and good of other generations look down on their surviving children. Nay, we have entered a theatre of action and of effort, where many witnesses are visible around us; and if *they* do not, literally, with living eyes, look down on *us, we*, at least, with the eye of meditative faith, must look forth on *them*.

II. By the word "seeing" in connection with the following exhortation, the fact that Christians "are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses" is

represented as an argument and motive for the discharge of a great and comprehensive enterprise.

And how does that fact realize this description? It furnishes bright examples; it affords sweet encouragements; and it suggests solemn admonitions.

1. It furnishes bright examples.

Science is wont to be taught by diagrams. The intelligent and skilful instructor verbally prescribes the rules and enunciates the principles; but, that both may be the better understood and the more vividly perceived, he embodies them, so to speak, in visible signs. Even so, Jehovah, in his written word, verbally sets forth what is ethically right, and gives rules for his disciples to observe. But, knowing the imperfection of our minds and the importance of the subject, He also exhibits, in positive examples, what He would have us clearly to understand, vividly to realize, permanently to remember, and faithfully to practise—draws, if one may dare to say so, his white diagrams on the black-board of history.—A father wishes to teach his little one how to do what may be useful both now and afterwards. By words he explains the matter to the child. But he combines with these another kind of instruction on the subject. He bids his pupil look at his elder brothers, as they conduct the process which the younger one is called to learn. And great is the advantage which the latter finds in seeing with his eyes the operation of which he had previously heard. Even so—if it be not presumptuous thus to apply the simple and familiar case referred to—the Great Father, in teaching his child, calls him to his knees and tells him what to do, but forthwith points him to his elder brethren doing the very thing required of *him*. A method characteristic

alike of the wisdom and of the condescension of our God!

Besides, the examples of departed saints are associated with sentiments and feelings peculiarly fitted to interest and attract. More especially is this the case where the example proposed is that of some tender and generous relative or friend; that, for instance, of an affectionate father who "had no greater joy than to see his children walking in the truth"—or of a gentle mother whose love to the child whom she had fondly nursed had 'grown with his growth and strengthened with his strength'—or of a "brother beloved"—or of a friend, a bosom-friend, "sticking closer than a brother." But, from the constitution of the human mind, there is a tendency in the personal biography of men eminent for excellence to interest; and by such records many a congenial, nay, many a careless, spirit has been melted into tenderness, or kindled into ardour.

And finally, in these instances of faith maintained and duty done, it cannot be alleged that the example is a super-human and transcendental one. These were not the denizens of some planet that never wandered from its moral orbit nor broke the harmony of the moral universe. Neither were they, as thus presented to our view, the glorified sons of immortality on high. But they were "men of like passions as ourselves;" and if they conquered by a might and a wisdom superior to their own, that wisdom and that might are offered to us all.

Such are some of the grounds on which examples of faith and piety are fitted to prove eminently powerful and eminently precious. Of course, however, examples in morals and religion are not, even as instrumental

means, sufficient of themselves. Submission to Divine authority is a primary and principal motive in the faithful discharge of duty; and Divine authority falls to be embodied in Divine law—in such rules as these:—“Thou shalt have no other gods before me,” “Thou shalt not kill,” “Thou shalt not steal,” “Thou shalt not covet.” Besides, human example is mixed—the best and noblest of mere men have evil to be shunned as well as good to be copied. And how is the spectator of such specimens of ransomed and regenerated humanity to distinguish between the two? By a standard of absolute and perfect duty—by the law of Heaven. But still, for reasons already stated, examples may be usefully combined with law—living representations of what the law prescribes may serve both to illustrate and to enforce it; and to this principle, in the case of the “great cloud of witnesses,” God himself, wisely and mercifully, conforms.

2. The fact that we are “compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses” affords sweet encouragements.

Some great practical problem is suggested—some important, and, if attained, eminently useful, object is proposed. Science and Labour ply their instruments to solve the problem, to realize the object. The discovery is made; and the discoverer takes out his patent, and, at the expense of others, enriches himself.

The problem was proposed—How may man do his duty? God answered the solemn question—the great men and good of former generations learned it—but, taking out no patents of concealment, they taught it too, and many of them, by their recorded lives, even now make it clearly manifest. Faith is mighty to

stimulate the efforts, and animate the spirit, of the man; and that is distinctly taught, is publicly proclaimed, by the "cloud of witnesses"—the men of God who, "being dead, yet speak." Nor is the power of faith the only encouraging lesson which their history and experience teach. In connection with their steadfast faith and vigorous efforts, they "obtained promises." To *them*, even while they sojourned here, promises were made, and promises were accomplished too. They found that religious faith is the minister of sacred peace, and that "in keeping God's commandments there is a great reward." What, in this respect, they learned for themselves, they now testify to *us*. And "what are these that are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? . . . These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," (Rev. vii. 13-17).

3. Nevertheless, the fact that "we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses" suggests certain solemn admonitions.

The persons more immediately referred to—the patriarchs, judges, kings, prophets, and other ancients, spoken of in the 11th chapter—lived, some of them in the grey dawn of time, and all of them amidst the

shadows that rested on the moral world until "the Sun of righteousness arose." And yet, how much knowledge did some of them possess! what vigorous faith! what burning zeal! what animating hope of a bright and blessed future! Alas! beside these giants of old renown, what pigmies do many professing Christians, and even some distinguished servants of Christ, appear! And shall not *their* attainments rebuke *our own*, and, showing us how far we are behind, prompt us to "reach forward to the things which are before?"

And yet, these mighty men of God were imperfect after all, and some of them disgracefully and criminally fell. Even Abraham was no exception; and he who was called "a man after God's own heart,"—alas! alas! how greatly and grievously he sinned! "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Trumpet-tongued, even the history of the good proclaims this solemn and salutary rule.

III. A duty of which the fact that "we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses" is represented as an enforcement, is prescribed and specified.

1. It is said:—"Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us."

Candidates in the classic race, in order to run successfully, were wont to disburthen themselves of needless weights, and to divest themselves of entangling garments; and to this practice there is here a reference. A similar allusion to preparations made by such as engaged in the ancient public games occurs in 1 Cor. ix. 25, 27.

This comprehensive precept obviously requires a certain relation even to things which, in themselves, are not sinful. Wealth, power, fame, may, each, be a

burden or hindrance in the Christian race. These often prevent the soul from entering on that race; and they sometimes interfere with activity, vigour, and success, in the prosecution of it. Is it, therefore, necessary to put them utterly away? Assuredly, not in every case. They may, if loosely held and faithfully employed, prove helps, instead of hindrances, in the Christian course. Wealth may be the means of usefulness in the cause of God—power may serve to extend his kingdom—fame may attract the wanderer towards the followers and friends of Christ. But these may also foster pride, and lead to self-indulgence, on the part of those who hold them. In that case, how burdened are their shoulders, how entangled are their feet! Worldly things must be kept in their own place, and used, not for pampering the flesh, but for promoting the progress of the soul and the welfare of the world. Lofty principle and vigorous faith—these are antidotes to the danger—these are securities for the appropriate use of what, used improperly, will retard the racer, or prevent the soul from ever entering on the race.

But it is mainly moral evil which is denoted by the phrase “every weight;” and, if we would “lay every weight aside,” we must “crucify the flesh” and part with sin. The verb here employed (*ἀποσιδημι*) is thus applied in a variety of passages well fitted to illustrate the nature of the duty here prescribed. “That ye put off,” says St. Paul, “concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,” (Ephes. iv. 22). “Lay apart,” says St. James, “all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness,” (James i. 21). “Laying aside,” says St. Peter, “all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-

speakings," (1 Pet. ii. 1). By conversion, and by progressive sanctification, such evil principles and practices must be subdued; and in proportion as they are so, is the man likely vigorously and successfully to run the race.

The phrase "the sin which doth so easily beset us," has, probably, suggested the frequent reference, in ordinary life, to what are called *the besetting sins* of particular men. It is, however, obvious that, not to the several sins to which different men, from constitution or habit, are peculiarly prone, but to one particular sin, does the sacred writer here refer. And what is that particular sin? The scope of the passage, the tenor of the Epistle, the analogy of other texts, and the experience, not only of sinners, but of saints themselves, combine to show that it is unbelief. That sin, even amidst the decencies of life, restrains the irregenerate soul from starting on the race. That sin, even while the soul has "tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious," is very apt to overtake it, to repress its energies, and to retard its course. Well, then, might the sacred writer require that it be laid aside. Well, as in another text, might he say:—"Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God," (chapt. iii. 12).

2. He here adds:—"and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

The "race" specified is obviously the positive course of moral and religious duty. It comprehends the promotion of the personal graces of Christianity in our own hearts, and characters, and lives—the discharge, in the several social spheres in which Providence has placed us, of the corresponding and appropriate duties—and

the active, and, if need be, public, maintenance of the cause, and extension of the kingdom, of God, and of God's Anointed, in the world at large.

Well may these things, taken together, be called "a race." In reference to such a course, there is a definite and specific track to be pursued—called in Scripture, "the way of God's commandments;" and in that track the candidate must actively, energetically, and stedfastly proceed, looking towards a recompence to be acquired. And yet, with all the resemblance, there is also a marked and mighty difference, between the course of duty and the classic race. In the latter, many ran, but only "one received the prize"—in the former, all who are "faithful unto death" "obtain the crown of life." In the one, the multiplication of candidates produced mutual rivalry and strife—in the other, they who run are knit together in fraternal love, and each says to those who refuse to join them in the race, "Come with us, and we will do you good." Unbroken toil characterized the efforts of the stadium—in the Christian enterprise, peace and joy are to be found even before the candidate attains the goal and receives the prize. And finally, "They do it," says St. Paul, "to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible," (1 Cor. ix. 25),—words in which he contrasts the wreath of parsley, or laurel, or yew, and even the fame, and honour, and high distinction, which the successful candidate in the public games secured, with the "crown of glory that fadeth not away."

This "race" is here represented as "set before us." The course of conduct specified is ordained by the infallible wisdom of God, explicitly prescribed in the written word, and, by means of the ordinances and the

providence of Heaven, habitually suggested to men's minds, and urged on their practical regard. That it is thus "set before us," is a fact which indicates its excellence, grandeur, and importance, and which also contradistinguishes it from other courses in which many men delight to run—more especially from that awful course which those pursue whose "feet run to evil" and whose "steps take hold on hell."

To *us* is here prescribed a wiser and better course by far:—"let us run with patience the race that is set before us." The Christian "race" we must actually "run;" that is, we must discharge the duties which that race involves, and which, in fact, the very word denotes. We must obtain from Heaven the strength and succour without which we will never enter on the race, nor prosecute it when it is begun; and thus prompted and invigorated, we must "gird up the loins of our mind," and address ourselves, with the combined energies of our material, intellectual, and moral nature, to the performance of the incumbent work and the attainment of the offered prize. And this we must do "with patience." The enterprise is great; and the obstacles in the way of fulfilling it may prove considerable in number, variety, and strength. Hence there is "need of patience," (chapt. x. 36). Afflictions—some of them rising out of our fidelity—may overtake us; but we must be "patient in tribulation," (Rom. xii. 12). Enemies may reproach, and otherwise seek to injure, us; but we must be "patient towards all men," (1 Thess. v. 14). The heart may be apt to be "discouraged because of the way," and, even while "pursuing," we may, not unfrequently, feel "faint;" but we must "bring forth fruit with patience," (Luke viii. 15).

This great duty of "running the race that is set before us" might be illustrated by a variety of other Scripture-figures.

"Let them that love him," says the prophetess and judge who "sat beneath the palm-tree," "Let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might," (Judges v. 31). That sun stood still in Gibeon; we must not, in this respect, resemble him—we must never stand still. On the dial of Ahaz the shadow of the sun went back; we must not, in that respect, resemble him—our shadow must never go back. But as thus magnificently described, the sun is a meet model for us all, and a noble image of a steady, vigorous, and useful course:—"He is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the extremity of heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof," (Psalm xix. 5, 6).

"They that wait upon the Lord," says Isaiah, "shall mount up with wings as eagles," (Isa. xl. 31). The flight of the eagle is swift and lofty, strong and steady. Even such must be the Christian's course. But how may the great result be realized? how may the noble attainment be secured? The prophet answers:—"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."

It is said of a virtuous woman, Prov. xxxi. 14, "She is like the merchants' ships." In the early Christian symbolism, the Church is denoted by a vessel with her sails unfurled, (Lord Lindsay, *Christian Art*). And the symbol is one which should be realized by every professedly Christian man. Freighted with the golden treasures of

truth and love, and favoured, in answer to our prayers, with the breezes of celestial grace, we must, with white and radiant sails unfurled, go gallantly along, our prow directed ever towards the haven of desire—the home and resting-place of ransomed and regenerated souls.

3. It is here required that the Hebrews, in “running the race,” should be “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Here, as if to show how reasonable and important it is to look to Christ, and also to indicate in what characters He is to be contemplated, He is described in several particulars.

And first of all, He is specified under the name of “Jesus.” A sweet and expressive name, very dear to the believer’s heart! It points to the sufferings, it explicitly represents the salvation, of the Lord. And if, at the cost of such sufferings, He visits his people with such salvation — surely, surely it is meet that they should “look unto Him.”

He is farther represented as “the Author and Finisher of faith”—for the word “our,” printed in italics, is thus indicated to be a supplement of the translators. Some suppose the meaning to be—that Christ personally was characterized by a perfect faith, and thus constitutes a bright example to his followers of that distinguished grace. Now, it is quite true, that Jesus lived a life of faith, and that He actually is, and in this very passage is virtually exhibited as being, an excellent example. But surely, the phrase “the Author and Finisher,” and even the expression, which some would give as a happier translation of the Greek (*ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν*), *the*

Prince and Perfecter, denotes action in reference to an object or objects different from himself. The meaning obviously is, either, that Christ is the Author and Completer of Christianity, occasionally called *the Faith*, or that He begins and consummates faith in the believer's soul—a sense which, retaining the ordinary and simple signification of *faith*, and agreeing as well as the other with the connection and design, is, on the whole, the better interpretation of the two. How the faith of believers depends on Christ is manifest. He has announced and ushered in the doctrine which Christian faith embraces. He has provided the gift of that Holy Spirit whose it is to engender and foster faith in the human mind. And by his ordinances, and Mediatorial power and grace, He produces, sustains, and strengthens that sacred principle.

It is here added respecting Christ—that He “endured the cross, despising the shame.” In this phrase, both the agony and the dishonour of death by crucifixion are set forth. Was Jesus, then, utterly insensible to these? Ah no! His body was keenly susceptible to pain, and his soul was exquisitely strung. The story of his experience in the Garden and on the Cross pathetically shows that He felt the anguish and the shame; and it accords in this respect with the doleful descriptions contained in the 22d and 40th Psalms, as well as other prophetic passages. Nevertheless, He “endured the cross;” that is—for the word “endured” (*ὑπέμεινεν*) denotes, not mere suffering, but courageous resolution, as is clear from the way in which the word is habitually used in the New Testament, and from the analogy of the word “despising”—He magnanimously bore the sufferings of crucifixion. And He “despised the

shame ;” that is, He scorned to be deterred by it from his work of mercy, and his spirit triumphed over it. Verily, his susceptibility to pain, and his sensitiveness to shame, combined with the intensity of the one, and the depth of the other, to ennoble his patience—to dignify and exalt his meek and magnanimous endurance.

It is affirmed that Jesus “endured the cross, despising the shame,” *for the joy that was set before Him*. It is terrible to think that this expression has been represented as an indication of selfishness on the part of Christ. Selfishness! perish the word forever in connection with the memory and the name of our illustrious Lord! Verily, “Christ pleased not himself,” (Rom. xv. 3). And there is nothing here inconsistent with that Apostolic statement. Even if it be meant that one motive which prompted Christ to “endure the cross, despising the shame,” was a regard to his own future blessedness, there is nought to tarnish the purity of his mind, or to contradict the texts which trace his consent to suffer pain and shame to a regard in his noble soul to the glory of the Father and the salvation of the lost. But it is extremely probable that the word “joy” here means, *the thing rejoiced in*—as in that saying, “Fulfil ye my joy,” that is, Do what makes me happy; and that the whole phrase “for the joy that was set before Him” denotes, *in reference to the objects fitted to gratify his soul*—which objects are principally these, God’s glory and man’s salvation. “He shall see,” says Jehovah by the prophet, “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities,” (Isa. liii. 11). And is it selfish to aim at the noblest

of all ends—to be actuated by the most sacred of all motives?

Finally, it is affirmed, that Jesus “sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” “Within the veil” there may be some outbursting glory, and on the right of that visible representation of the presence and majesty of the Invisible God the Anointed Son may literally sit. But it is uncertain whether, in the heavenly sanctuary, such a disposition of things exists; and at any rate, the outstanding idea expressed by the statement that Christ “sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” is, beyond all reasonable question, this—that He was elevated to a pre-eminently lofty place of dignity and power—that He became “head over all things,” and received “a name exalted above every other name.”

Such, in its five particulars, is the description here given of Christ. And in connection with this description, the sacred writer requires the Christian Hebrews to be “looking unto Jesus” as they “run the race.” How and why they were thus to look to Him the description itself is, in some degree, fitted to explain.

Christ is a *bright example*, and in that character must be looked to by those who run the race.

True, He seems here to be exhibited as the Judge—the *βραβεύτης*—of the sacred course. But probably, in many cases, he who, in the classic games, assigned the prize, had been himself a candidate and conqueror in his day; and if so, this fact would be fitted to stimulate the efforts of those who ran. True, others than Jesus are held forth as examples to the Church; and these, as has been already shown, may serve to prompt and encourage the efforts of the candidate for an eternal

crown. But all such examples are imperfect. It may be doubted whether, in the faithful record of any merely human believer, every one of the elements of moral and religious excellence is distinctly embodied and expressed. But, in the recorded life and manifested character of Christ, every such element appears. Architects speak of *high*, and of *low*, relief. In the case of the saints, it is, after all, as if in *low relief* that spiritual excellence is shown. But it is in full development, in outstanding prominence, in *high relief*, that it appears in the history and character of Christ. In others, what is good requires to be distinguished from what is evil. But evil there was none in Christ—the “chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.” And O, in the particular point referred to in the context—in the generous self-denial and noble magnanimity with which He “endured the cross, despising the shame”—what a bright example has He given!

Jesus is a *witness of the race*, and in that character is to be looked to by those who run it.

In the public games, he who was to pronounce the sentence and award the prize surveyed the candidates, and marked the defeats which they encountered and the progress which they made. Even so with Christ. In the days of his flesh, He “needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man,” (John ii. 24, 25)—even then, He could say to Nathanael, “Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee,” (John i. 48). And now, “his eyes are as a flame of fire.” From heaven He spake to the open ear of his servant John, commissioning him to carry to certain of the Churches these oracular words:—“I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy

patience;" "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty;" "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is;" "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead;" "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith;" "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot," (Rev. ii. 2, 9, 13, 19; iii. 1, 15). The eye of Jesus is intently fixed on those who run, or profess to run, the race—to the careless, what a solemn warning! to the faithful, what a sublime encouragement! to each, what a summoning call!

Christ *has provided, and will himself confer, the prize,* and, in these relations, is to be looked to by men as they "run the race."

By the suffering and shame described in this very verse, "glory, honour," and eternal joy were purchased for believing men. Death borne by Christ procured for *them* everlasting life. The cross endured by *Him* made provision of a bright and undecaying crown for *them*. And He who bought it with his sacrificial blood will bestow it with his kingly hand. He who "is set down at the right hand of God" will make believers sharers in the "fulness of joy" which is before his Father's face—the "pleasures for evermore" which are "at God's right hand." "To him that overcometh," are his own animating words, "will I grant to sit with me in my throne, as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne," (Rev. iii. 21); and again, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," (Rev. ii. 10). The love, the mighty love, in the exercise of which the crown was purchased and will hereafter be bestowed—and the prize itself, so dearly bought, so freely offered, so distinctly promised,

and so gloriously conferred—what powerful motives, what vast encouragements, are these!

Finally, Christ *possesses a treasury of grace*, and thus and therefore they who would successfully run the race should look to Him.

It is his to guide the footsteps of the candidates—his to invigorate their souls—his to speed their efforts—his to make them prosper and prevail. How meet, then, to wait upon the Lord! how urgently important to seek his face! In doing these things, many have “renewed their strength;” and still the same appliances are ready to be followed by the same success. To Christ, then, and through Christ to the Eternal Father, let us go, that we “may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us, in the time of need.” And let these be among the honest and earnest supplications of our souls:—“Shew me thy ways, O Lord, teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for Thou art the God of my salvation, on Thee do I wait all the day,” (Psalm xxv. 4, 5). Still fresh, still true, are the words of Him who was crucified in weakness once, but is now exalted gloriously—“My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness,” (2 Cor. xii. 9). Nor is that ancient promise obsolete—“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint,” (Isa. xl. 31.)

3. *For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*

This verse contains a repetition—partial, indeed, but most appropriate—of the exhortation in the previous

verse to be "looking unto Jesus" as we "run the race." A certain danger is specified, and a certain antidote prescribed.

I. A danger is specified :—"lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

1. The caution implies that to be thus faint and wearied is a great evil.

The cause in which Christians are engaged is indeed a noble one. It is prescribed by God, founded on the mediation of his Incarnate Son, fitted and designed to realize "glory to God in the highest and on earth peace," and commensurate, in its issues and results, with eternity itself. How unworthy of such a cause, for its adherents and professed champions to be "wearied and faint in their minds!"

Christ, their Master and Exemplar, "endured the cross, despising the shame." His work was arduous; but He courageously performed it. His dangers were formidable; but He bravely met them. His sufferings were severe; but He magnanimously bore them. How unlike that perfect Model—how unworthy of those who profess to be his followers and friends—to be "wearied and faint in their minds!"

A cheerful heart and an undaunted brow in the service of the Saviour are essential to the sunshine of the soul. In such sunshine the believer, if he would be a happy man, must bask. But how dark and dismal the condition of one who feels no sympathy with the work which he knows that he is required to do! how cheerless, comfortless a thing it needs must be for the Christian to "be weary and faint in his mind!"

Christians are "the light of the world" and "the salt of the earth." Their fellow-creatures, perishing in ignor-

ance and unbelief, require, urgently require, their zealous, vigorous, persevering efforts. Who, if not they, will point the world to Christ? Who, if not they, will be the instruments of saving souls, and gathering wandering spirits to the standard of the cross—to the refuge of the lost? But alas! how little good can the world be expected to get from those who are “wearied and faint in their minds!”

2. This caution implies that Christians are subject to the evil—are exposed to the danger—here specified.

Christian duty consists in renouncing what human nature loves, performing what human nature loathes, and aiming at what finds no congenial taste in the natural heart. Hence, to the unconverted sinner, remaining as he is, Christian duty is a morally impracticable thing. But even the believer, besides being constituted of a feeble body and a feeble soul, has relics of the old nature—lingering principles of moral evil—in his soul. And so, the duties of the spiritual life are apt, in certain states, to frighten him, or even to find but faint and feeble sympathy in his imperfectly renewed heart.

In the maintenance of the cause of Christ, considerable trials are frequently encountered. Over and above the common ills of life, sufferings arising out of their fidelity are wont to befall believers. One of these is the reproach of worldly men—another is the frequent disappointment of the champion of truth and friend of souls in his benevolent efforts for the welfare of the world. And on such accounts he is apt to be discouraged—yea, sometimes to be “wearied and faint in his mind.”

It is obvious from certain parts of this Epistle that the sacred writer saw traces among the Christian Hebrews of

this very state of mind. And what *they*, in this respect, experienced, is visible around us, and, on the part of believers, is sometimes sensibly felt within. What minister, what member, of the living Church of the living God can say that he has never shrunk from arduous duty—that he has never trembled in the face of painful discipline—that he has never been “wearied and faint in his mind?”

II. Against this great evil an antidote is here prescribed:—“Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself.”

1. There is here a description of Jesus Christ.

The “contradiction” which Christ endured comprehends the blasphemies and manifold reproaches which, in the course of his public ministry, were heaped upon his head—the contumelious treatment He received in the high-priest’s hall and at the bar of Pontius—the cruel scorn with which He was assailed when suspended on the cross—the insolent rejection of his heavenly doctrine—and probably even the hostile treatment which consisted rather in deeds than words.

This is called “the contradiction *of sinners*.” It is not of such comparatively mild and respectful resistance as even a friend may sometimes exhibit towards the object of his love that the sacred writer speaks. The contradiction which Christ so meekly and patiently endured was that of bitter foes—of men respecting whom He could say, as, in one of the prophetic Psalms, He actually says:—“Many bulls have compassed me, strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round;” “Dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet,” (Psalm xxii. 12, 16).—As if still further to enhance the con-

ception of the contradiction specified, it is said, "*such* contradiction." It was contradiction peculiarly malignant, harsh, and insolent.—The expression "against himself," as connected with the statement that Christ "endured" the contradiction, indicates his patience and magnanimity to have been pre-eminently great. The contradiction He submitted to was contradiction directed—not against his enemy—not against his friend—but "against *himself*." And so, in working out redemption, He "gave"—not "the cattle on a thousand hills"—not a congregation of sinful men—not a hecatomb of angels—but "himself."

The *endurance* here specified was that of resolute, courageous, magnanimous submission.

2. The Christian Hebrews are required to guard themselves, by considering this noble Sufferer, from being "wearied and fainting in their minds."

The word here rendered "consider" (*ἀναλογίσασθε*) involves the idea of bringing the case proposed to the contemplation of the Hebrews to bear upon themselves. Realizing Christ, they were to "arm themselves with the same mind." The terms in which He is here described indicate some of the principal aspects in which they were to "consider Him." They were to consider Him in the bitterness of his sufferings, and in the magnanimity with which He bore them; and, in order to enhance their estimate of both, they were to consider his person, as comprehending immaculate manhood and true Divinity combined. And how, O how, could they thus consider Christ without feeling their spirits fired with admiration, without seeking to emulate his noble spirit, and without counteracting the temptation to be "weary and faint in their minds?"

4. *Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.*

The sacred writer here continues his enforcement of patience and perseverance.

I. He speaks of a certain struggle:—"striving against sin."

In such a strife the Christian Hebrews were engaged—in such, every believer in some degree participates.

1. There is a strife occasioned by the resistance of worldly men to those who are devoted to the cause of Christ.

To believers, as the enemies of what worldlings love, and the promoters of what worldlings hate, the votaries of earth are essentially, and in some cases, violently and actively opposed. Now, it is a Christian law, "Resist not evil," and with that law the friends of Christ have, in some degree, learned to comply. But, in the opposition made by worldlings to believers, the former sometimes aim at drawing the latter from their strict allegiance to the cause and kingdom of their heavenly Lord—at making them altogether unchristian, or less Christian than, with all their faults, they actually are. There is a tendency, too, on the part of reproach and persecution to shake the resolution of the mind; and to that tendency believers themselves are in some degree exposed. Hence, resistance is required, on *their* part, to what might otherwise drive or draw them into great and grievous sin. And, as taught and succoured by celestial grace, they *do* endeavour to prevent the evil aim of the enemies of Christ from taking effect on their souls, and the perilous tendency of the world's hostility from overpowering their fidelity to their Heavenly King.

2. The very essence of the spiritual enterprise lies, to a great extent, in "striving against sin."

Sin is opposition to the law and government of God. Sin, dwelling in the believer, degrades his nature, defiles his conscience, darkens his hopes, violates his peace, and offends his Saviour. Sin, triumphant in the world, maintains the reign of Satan, flies in the face of Heaven, and ruins the soul of man. To resist this vile and formidable evil, whether in themselves or others, is part, and a very momentous part, of the "high calling" of believers; and what their Captain calls them, in this respect to do, they are prompted by faith and love, and enabled by the succours of heavenly grace, in some degree to realize.

II. It is here affirmed, that, in "striving against sin," the Hebrew Christians, in respect of suffering, had only gone a limited length:—"ye have not yet resisted unto blood."

"Blood" denotes violent death, or, at least, some peculiarly severe attack from an opposing power. It seems from the phraseology employed as if those addressed had suffered something in the Christian cause; but it is expressly said that they had not encountered the last extremity of persecuting violence. If it was needless for them so to do, it was right that they should, in so far, preserve themselves secure; and assuredly, to plunge headlong into martyrdom without any urgent cause is not required, and never was, of the follower of Christ. But it is probable that, in the present case, the Hebrews had not been sufficiently courageous, and that if they had been more faithful to Christ, they would have suffered more from men.

5. *And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

Five things may be observed in these verses.

I. A text is quoted from the Book of Proverbs, and "the exhortation" of the passage cited (Prov. iii. 11, 12) is represented as "speaking to" the Hebrew Christians.

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime," says St. Paul, "were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope," (Rom. xv. 4). Comprehensive as the New Testament is in reference to matters of faith and duty, the Old Testament is still an authoritative and important record for the instruction and guidance of the Church. It contains much interesting and useful sacred history peculiar to itself. A large amount of beautiful and lofty poetry, devoted to the noblest of all themes, is to be found in its rich and varied pages. On the Old Testament we are dependent, alike for the general proof of Revelation arising from the fulfilment of Prophecy, and for the evidence of Christ's Messiahship in particular arising from the realization in his person, character, sufferings, and glory, of predictions delivered by Hebrew seers. The whole Economy of Moses, as described in the Old Testament, constitutes, when kindled up by the light of the New, a manifestation of the Mediatorial Son, and also an exhibition of the special providence, and wondrous condescension and wisdom, of Him who formed and fashioned it. And as for the rules and principles of morality—these are presented in a vast variety of aspects in the Hebrew Scriptures, and with

special pungency and power in the particular Book from which the quotation in this passage is derived, the Book of Proverbs.

Some Scottish fathers tell, that one of the first school-books put into their hands was the Proverbs of Solomon. And assuredly, from the practical simplicity of its rich and pregnant principles, and its pointed sententiousness of style, that Book of ancient Scripture is admirably adapted to the young. It has been well remarked that, whereas Plato wrote over the door of his Academy, 'Let no one ignorant of Geometry enter here,' Solomon wrote on the porch of the Proverbs—"To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion," (Lawson, *Exposit. of Proverbs*). And yet it is added, Prov. i. 5, 6:—"A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings." Accordingly, some distinguished minds—those, for example, of Lord Bacon, Bishop Hall, and Mr. Coleridge—have felt peculiar interest, and taken special pleasure, in the Book of Proverbs. No doubt, many of the Proverbs are, so to speak, the very common-places of morality. But on these common-places the safety, health, and happiness of the moral world depend. Even in these common-places, the wise and inspired mind of Solomon rose superior to the discoveries and apprehensions of distinguished Heathen sages. Interspersed are many germs and evolutions of profound and majestic moral principles. The whole sphere of duty and obligation is traversed and overtaken by the Book of Proverbs. And the pointed power of the style, and the Divine authority of the rules, give that Book

a vast pre-eminence. The Queen of Sheba travelled "from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon." Men possessing the Bible need not, for that important end, to go to Palestine, or to traverse widespread continents or surging seas. The wisdom, the words of Solomon, are "very near" them. In the Book of Proverbs, they are treasured up in store; in the Book of Proverbs, they are accessible alike to prince and peer—to man, woman, and child.

In the New Testament, the Proverbs are recommended to us, in common with the other Books of the Old, by the general declaration — "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," (2 Tim. iii. 16). And as elsewhere, so in the present passage, a particular portion of the Book of Proverbs is cited, and applied for the instruction and guidance of men on whom "the ends of the world were come."

II. It is here affirmed, that this passage of the Proverbs spoke to the Christian Hebrews *as to children*.

The Bible throughout, in its constitution style, is adapted to the childhood of man's being—to the weak capacities of his soul. Bengel, whose reverence and love for the word of God were so intense and decided, nevertheless remarks:—'In the celestial world, we shall know, and that ere long, even as we are known; and then the Scriptures themselves will seem to have been worded in adaptation to our comprehension, in the style of a little child's first book,' (Burk's *Memoir of J. A. Bengel*). But it is specifically in relation to the passage cited from the Proverbs that it is here affirmed—"The exhortation speaketh unto you as unto children." In that ex-

hortation, not only is the phrase "my son" employed, but Christian believers, for whom it is designed, are addressed as children, and that more especially in two respects. (1.) It is usual, as it is right, to chasten children; so are believers chastened. (2.) It would be monstrous for children, either to despise chastisement, or to faint under it; and thus monstrous would it be for believers so to do.

III. The rule, or requisition, quoted from the Book of Proverbs is:—"My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him."

1. The believer must not despise this Divine discipline.

There are three ways in which this part of the rule may be violated. A person may be hardened against sensibility to the suffering which the affliction is legitimately fitted to produce. Or he may fail to apprehend the practical lessons which it is calculated to suggest. Or, perceiving, perhaps, what those lessons are, he may omit practically to apply them to the amendment of his faults and the regulation of his life. In none of these ways must the Christian "despise the chastening of the Lord." In each and all of the cases supposed, there would be an insult cast on the providence of God; in each and all of them, the great moral use of God's "chastening" would be missed.

2. The believer must not "faint" when God rebukes him.

In the education of children, God—that very God who prescribes the use of the chastening rod—would have fathers "not to provoke their children to anger, lest they be discouraged," (Col. iii. 21). Nor would He have his believing people to faint under his own sore

chastisements. Thus to faint would imply a failure on *their* part to recognize his parental love and care. It would be, as it were, a shrinking of the soul from Him to whom the rebuke should lead them to cling the more. It would unfit them for the vigorous discharge of those very duties for which their Heavenly Father's discipline is fitted and designed to train them. And it would be a spectacle likely to hinder others from giving themselves up to God.

IV. In the quotation from the Proverbs, the rule is enforced by the consideration:—"whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

This consideration comprehends a variety of elements, more especially these:—(1.) That the afflictions of believers come from God; (2.) That He loves them with parental tenderness, and that they are his own dear children; (3.) That, in *their* case, affliction is his kind paternal discipline; (4.) That He thus treats every one whom He constitutes his son. And how manifestly fitted were these considerations, on the one hand, to prompt and incline Christians to turn their afflictions to good account, and, on the other, to inspire them with patience, fortitude, and peace, beneath God's heavy hand—to guard them against flying in the Chastener's face, or murmuring at the strokes He was pleased to inflict, or fainting under his rebuke!

V. The sacred writer remarks that the exhortation quoted from the Proverbs had been "forgotten" by the Christian Hebrews—or, according to an interpretation consistent with the original phraseology, and proposed by Ernesti and Stuart, appeals to them whether they have forgotten it.

They had heard or read that exhortation. From a father's or mother's lips, from the service of the synagogue, from the personal perusal of the Old Testament, or from the instructions of a Christian pastor or a Christian friend, they may have learned it. But it may have slipped out of their memory, because of having produced too little impression on their heart. Wisdom, true wisdom, requires a sound and salutary principle to be not only intellectually learned, but also earnestly remembered and faithfully applied.

7. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8. But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

The principles propounded in the passage just quoted from the Proverbs, are here, to a considerable extent, repeated. The verses comprehend five particulars.

I. The afflictions of believers proceed from God.

Throughout the Bible it is distinctly taught that all tribulation, whether personal, domestic, or national, is dealt out by the hand of Heaven. It springs not from the dust; it comes not by blind chance or undetermined accident; nor are the natural laws according to which it originates or acts the sole and complete explanation of the matter. "Is there evil in a city," is there suffering in a house, "and the Lord hath not done it?" And as God deals out the afflictions of the world, so it is right and important to trace them to his hand; nor will the lessons they are fitted to teach be otherwise satisfactorily learned.

Here, however, the reference is specifically to the afflictions of *believers*; and these are traced to God.

True, certain of them come from the malignity of men ; and persecution is certainly one of the kinds of affliction referred to in the present text. There is mystery as to the compatibility, in this matter, between the sinful agency of man and the active providence of God. But assuredly, both combine ; and while man's part in the case is wrong, God's is absolutely and entirely right. How instructive, how consoling, for the believer to be-think himself of who and what the glorious Being is from whom his afflictions flow ! That Being is infinitely wise, and just, and kind, and faithful. Wherefore, in the tribulations which He sends his own, He cannot contravene his skilfully-concerted plans, nor violate the rights of his creatures, nor break his promise to his friends, nor resist the dictates of his mercy. Nay, it may be confidently believed that, in the appointment of these tribulations, wisdom, justice, faithfulness, and love are all in glorious exercise.

II. The afflictions of believers come to them in the character of God's paternal discipline.

The filial relation of the believer to God is a favourite idea in the Bible. This, in its more comprehensive sense, embraces a variety of particulars. God constitutes the believer his by regeneration or the new birth. That is the fundamental fact in the Christian sonship, as exhibited by St. Peter and St. John. In the writings of St. Paul, God is represented as constituting men his children by *adoption*—as taking them out of the family of Satan and the world, and introducing them into his own. But after the initiatory step is taken—after the decisive deed is done—the work of a Father on God's part, and the experience of a son on man's, proceed. As a Father, God loves believers tenderly—as a Father,

He provides for their returning wants—as a Father, He protects them in the midst of dangers—as a Father, He counsels them in the midst of difficulties—as a Father, He consoles them in the midst of trials; and yet, as a Father, He corrects and chastises them, nor is it till He has sent them the discipline of suffering that He introduces them to the inheritance of eternal joy.

God's paternal chastisement involves these three particulars:—(1.) He inflicts suffering; (2.) This He does in the exercise of love to him on whom the suffering falls; (3.) This painful visitation is meant for the improvement of the child.

III. God inflicts chastisement on all his sons.

All God's children, so long as they linger on the earth, are sinful; and their Father knoweth them altogether. Sin on *their* part makes it necessary that they should suffer. And whereas a human father, like a human judge, is shut out, to a great extent, from the region of the soul, and is restricted, almost entirely, in the case of inflicted punishment, to overt and obvious acts—God, being omniscient, may dispense his discipline in reference to the sentiments and feelings of the mind, as well as to the visible deeds of the outward life. Often, indeed, it is with a special view to check and overbear bad feelings in the heart, that Heaven's discipline descends.

And as all God's children on the earth are sinful, so as to stand in need of discipline—so their Father loves them all with paternal tenderness, so as to be induced to send affliction to them all. These are two things which may prevent a father from chastening his erring child—the want of affection, and weak favouritism.

But neither of these has place in the heart of God, in reference to any adopted, to any regenerate, child of his. Neither the want of love, nor an ill-regulated tenderness, will withhold his hand from discipline, when his erring child requires it.

IV. If a professed Christian receives not chastisement, he is a bastard and not a son.

Illegitimate children is a name which may be applied to such as are members of the visible Church without being born again. Many such there seem to be in the Christian Commonwealth. They make a religious profession—they enjoy religious privileges—but God does not acknowledge them as his, nor are they the heirs of the great inheritance.

It is not here said that any man passes through the world entirely free from affliction. But it is said that, if one of these professedly Christian Hebrews were to do so, or were the afflictions that befell him to have nothing of the character of paternal discipline, then he would be, as it were, an illegitimate and unacknowledged son—a bastard, and not a true and honourable child. This conclusion obviously follows from the principle propounded in the phrase, “whereof all”—that is, all God’s cherished children—“are partakers,” and in the question, “What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?”

V. If these Christian Hebrews “endured chastening,” then God “dealt with them as with sons.”

The word rendered “endure” (*ὑπομένετε*) denotes magnanimous submission. Many experience affliction without being the sons of God; and even a believer sometimes meets chastisement in a temper far different from the genuine spirit of a child. Here, as in many a

text beside, patience, courage, and meek resignation to their Father's will, are recommended to God's chastened children. The whole doctrine of affliction as propounded in this passage constitutes a suitable argument, and a powerful motive, for such a state of mind. But here it is urged by the consideration, that if thus God's children "endure chastisement," then God "dealeth with them as with sons." Then they give evidence that they have been born again—then they show themselves to be sustained by the paternal grace of Heaven—then "tribulation worketh patience," and a pledge is given of "the peaceable fruit of righteousness."

What interesting, animating, and yet monitory, views of the afflictions of believers do these two pregnant and comprehensive verses give! All affliction, indeed, is not paternal discipline. But such is the true character of all the sufferings that befall the believer. And even when God sends sufferings to others, these, if faithfully applied on *their* part, are fitted to drive the sinner to the bosom of One who "waiteth to be gracious."

9. *Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?* 10. *For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.*

These verses embrace three general particulars.

I. Certain persons, under the name "fathers of our flesh," are contradistinguished from God, called "the Father of spirits."

The idea is very generally understood to be—that human fathers are but the parents of the corporeal

frame, whereas God is the Parent of the immaterial and immortal soul. Accordingly, in the controversy between the Creationists and the Traducians—of whom the former, embracing many Roman Catholics and also a considerable number of Protestants, have maintained that at birth the soul of the individual is created by God, and the latter, including a large proportion of Lutherans, have held that the soul, like the body, is propagated from father to child—the present text has been supposed to be in favour of the former. As to the question itself—although there are difficulties on either side, it is probably more likely that there is something like a perpetual creation of human souls in the history of the species, than that the immaterial part of man is propagated just like the bodily frame; although, indeed, the Scripture-doctrine of transmitted corruption indicates that the soul, as well as the body, has some constitutional connection with the parent. But the phraseology of this passage does not determine the matter, and probably does not directly touch the question. “The Father of spirits” is a name which, in this merely psychological sense, would fail to harmonize with the idea given in the context of the paternal relation of Jehovah to believers.

In order to preserve the spiritual idea of that relation, some understand the distinction in the present text to be identical with that propounded in certain other passages between “the flesh” and “the spirit”—as if the meaning were, that men are the fathers of our natural existence, whereas God is the Author of the new nature, the active Source of regeneration. But it may be reasonably objected to this view:—(1.) That the plural “spirits” is here employed; and (2.) That

the phrase "the Father of spirits" seems to point to that expression in the Old Testament—an expression having no such reference to the "divine nature" communicated in the new birth—"the God of the spirits of all flesh," (Numb. xvi. 22). Still more unsatisfactory is the idea, that "flesh" denotes men in an *embodied*, and "spirits" men in a *disembodied* state. To restrict the idea of Divine paternity in this text to the condition of souls after death, would be altogether out of keeping with the view given in the context of Jehovah as a Father; nor would it secure a clear and satisfactory argumentative connection between the fact that God is "the Father of spirits," and the requirement that the Christian Hebrews should be "in subjection to" Him.

The distinction meant is probably not restricted to the *origination* of the "flesh" and the "spirit" respectively, but equivalent to this—that, whereas natural parents pay exclusive, or special, regard, to the bodily constitution, and temporal condition, of their children, God, in dealing with believers as their Father, pays principal and peculiar regard to the wants and welfare of their immortal souls. In this view, the title given to God admirably harmonizes with what is said in the context respecting his paternal relation to believers, and the contrast accords with the antithetical ideas of ver. 10.

It is here suggested that, whereas the writer, and the Christians to whom his Epistle is addressed, "had fathers of their flesh who corrected them and they gave them reverence," "much rather" did it beseem them to be "in subjection to the Father of spirits and live."

Reasonably or unreasonably, these natural, and probably, in general, unconverted, parents had chastened them

in early life ; and *under* the discipline, or *after* it, they had paid respect to the persons, and yielded submission to the will, of those by whom the correction was dispensed. It was reasonable and right that such respect should have been rendered, and such submission given, to their earthly parents. But surely, surely, it was still more incumbent, still more important, *under* Divine discipline and *after* it, to reverence, and submit themselves to, that nobler and better Father by whom, for kind and momentous ends, it was dealt out. To be "in subjection" to such a Father—the rightful Monarch of the universe, and yet the generous and condescending Guide and Guardian of their souls—how much was this required of them by a regard for consistency, by the claims of moral obligation, and also by a sense of self-interest ! For as, by the Jewish law, the obstinate and rebellious son was doomed to die, so under the government of Heaven, he who piously subjects himself to God, shall, as is suggested in the present passage, "live." Such subjection, though not the meritorious cause, is a pledge and instrument, of spiritual good—of present peace and future glory.

III. The duty of subjection, on the part of the Hebrew Christians, to "the Father of spirits" is enforced by the consideration that, whereas the "fathers of their flesh" "for a few days chastened them for their own pleasure," God chastens his children "for their profit, that they may be partakers of his holiness."

The human fathers here described may have, generally, been unconverted men. Nevertheless, it can scarcely be supposed that they found pleasure in punishing their children. Even to a worldly father, if he have a father's heart, it is painful to inflict suffering on his erring son. The phrase rendered, "after their own pleasure," (*κατὰ τὸ*

δοκοῦν αὐτοῖς), merely means, *according to the suggestions of their own minds, or, as they themselves pleased.* Still, the contrast stated between these earthly parents and God implies that the minds of the former were, in respect of the discipline of their children, very liable, if not absolutely sure, to err. The phrase “for a few days,” it is natural and reasonable to consider as referring to the opening years of life. A few interpreters, however, suppose the idea to be—that the corrections of human parents were administered with a reference to a comparatively brief period of the child’s existence, the period of his residence on earth, the period of his fleeting life.

Having thus described the discipline of these human fathers, the sacred writer proceeds to describe the superior discipline of God:—“He,” says he, “for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.” “For our profit” denotes the general design, in reference to his children, of God’s paternal chastisements—He seeks to do them good. And then, in the succeeding clause, the kind of good contemplated is specified—it is in the highest sense that He would have his children profited by the discipline that He employs—He seeks that they may be spiritually pure, and thus bear a close resemblance to himself. An aim, how generous! a result, how precious!

By the connective word “For,” the description contrasting the discipline of man with the discipline of God is associated with the rule prescribed in ver. 9—is brought to bear, as an enforcement, on the duty of being “in subjection to the Father of spirits.” The force of the argument is clear—O let the power of the motive be practically felt.

11. *Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*

The former division of this verse refers to the aspect in which Divine chastisement, at the time of enduring it, appears. The chastisement produces pain; and indeed, unless it be felt, it is not likely to prove profitable to the man to whom it is dispensed. The word "seemeth," however, suggests that the aspect in which the chastisement is at first contemplated—that of the "grievous," not the "joyous"—is not the only one in which to the exercised sufferer it will appear, and that, in reality, the discipline is not only wise and righteous and kind, but also fraught with future happiness, and ultimate advantage, to such as rightly use it. This last idea is expressly stated in the latter division of the verse.

It is not poetry alone that tells us that "sweet are the uses of adversity." The records of the Bible, and the experience of life, exemplify the usefulness of affliction in the case of some hitherto careless and unconverted men. And as to the chastisements of God's children—these authorities concur in showing them to be of vast advantage to the soul. Nor is it by personal instances alone that Scripture proves it so to be. In many beautiful texts, the general proposition is affirmed. "Tribulation worketh patience," says St. Paul, "and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us," (Rom. v. 3-5); and again, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceed-

ing and eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal," (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18). And so, of Divine chastisement it is said in the present text :—" afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

The Greek word corresponding to "exercised" (*γυμνασμένοις*) refers to the custom of stripping off the garments in the public games for the sake of free and disencumbered action. The vigorous and earnest endeavour to turn Divine chastisement to good practical account is thus figuratively represented. To the child of God who is thus exercised by his Father's chastisement it is said to "yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness." The "fruit" may either be, righteousness itself, or, the advantages which righteousness produces. Well-used affliction promotes true religion in the heart, and character, and conduct, by teaching such practical lessons as, the evil of sin, the uncertainty of life, and the value of the Saviour, and drawing the soul from earthly confidence to God himself ; and the righteousness thus produced and fostered and confirmed leads to good and glorious results. The word "peaceable" beautifully characterizes the blessed effects of sanctified affliction ; and the idea seems to be antithetical to that of the struggle or tumult involved in the previous chastisement.

How profitable, and how pleasant, to have tribulation thus applied to the soul which it is meant and fitted to instruct and edify, and thus fraught with consequences favourably affecting alike the days of time and the ages

of eternity ! And so by the children of God who meekly receive and faithfully use their Father's chastisement it is regularly found to be. The cloud enhances the grandeur of the sunshine. Roses grow on the prickly thorn. From fallen leaves spring pleasant flowers. The blighted blossoms are the germs of mellow fruits.

12. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees ; 13. And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way ; but let it rather be healed.

In the previous part of the chapter, many considerations have been presented fitted to stir, sustain, and animate believers. Such is "the great cloud of witnesses," and He, "the Captain of their salvation," who bore the brunt of the battle, who braved the terrors of the foe, who conquered gloriously, and, having overcome, "is set down with the Father on his throne." Unlike to those of whom Juvenal so graphically tells that they set up representations of the great Stoic Masters in their houses, but manifested nought of the fortitude and simplicity of the men whom they professed to honour, the Hebrews here addressed were not only to contemplate the image of their ancestral leaders, and the absolutely perfect model which the character of Christ afforded, but to catch what was great and noble in the former, and to use the latter, with its unsullied and surpassing excellence, alike for the encouragement of their hearts and for the guidance of their footsteps. It is, however, specifically to the views of affliction presented in the verses immediately preceding that the connective word "Wherefore" here refers. And as these views furnished the premises of a powerful argu-

ment, so the faith of them was fitted to afford a prompting and animating motive to the mind. If the afflictions of believers come from God—if they come in the character of paternal discipline, dispensed in mercy, and meant for good—and if “to them that are exercised thereby” they “yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness;” surely believers may, and should, receive them meekly, bear them patiently, and, by means of them, be taught to discharge vigorously and faithfully the duties of the religious life—and surely, also, they ought so to bethink themselves of whence their afflictions come, at what their afflictions aim, and whither their afflictions tend, as to be strong to do what their Lord requires, and strong to bear what their Father sends. Such is the force of the connective word “Wherefore,” as here introducing the succeeding counsels of these two verses.

The first of those counsels is:—“Lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees.”

The sacred writer was very familiar with the phraseology of the Old Testament. It was to the ancestors of these Christian Hebrews that the Old Testament was originally given. And the former, in addressing the latter, has just been quoting a text from the Book of Proverbs. It may, therefore, be reasonably supposed that there is here a reference to Isa. xxxv. 3, 4:—“Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees: say to them that are of a feeble heart, Be strong, fear not.”

In a state of exhaustion, and especially in a state of mental anxiety and oppression, the hands “hang down,” and the knees tremble. From the constitution of the body, and the laws of connection between the corporeal and the mental part of the human system, the nerves and

muscles of these particular parts of the bodily frame, in such circumstances, lose their wonted energy and vigour. It is meant, then, by the exhortation, "Erect the hands which hang down and the feeble knees"—that the Christian Hebrews—some of whom, it is probable, had greatly failed in moral energy and confidence—were to take heart, to bear their trials bravely, and, in spite of them, nay, because of them, to address themselves to the vigorous discharge of the duties, how arduous soever they might seem, of their Christian enterprise and calling. Thus were they to glorify the God in whose service they had engaged, to "adorn the doctrine" of that Saviour on whom they had professed to build their hopes, to pursue with cheerfulness a heavenward course, and virtually to say to erring souls—"Come with us, and we will do you good."

It is added:—"And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way."

It is perhaps the public race formerly referred to, but more probably a journey along a path towards an expected resting-place, that is here alluded to. The Christian Hebrews were to "make straight paths for their feet," by getting rid of the moral obstacles which their own faint-heartedness and fears created, and addressing themselves heartily and vigorously to their Christian work. The phrase, "lest that which is lame be turned out of the way," has been supposed to refer to others than the travellers here required to "make straight paths for their feet." And certainly, moral feebleness and discouragement, on the one hand, and moral vigour and cheerfulness, on the other, have an influence on such as witness them in the professed friends and followers of Christ. But it contributes to simplicity and

harmony of sense to consider the "lame" (τὸ χωλὸν) here specified as characteristic of the persons directly addressed, and to suppose that these are cautioned, in this part of the passage, against sitting down on the road-side and refusing to proceed, or diverging from the path and flinching from the journey. In this part of the passage, there seems to be an allusion to Prov. iv. 25-27.

It is added, "But let it"—that is, the lame—"rather be healed."

Undoubtedly, Christians are to be, in some sense, physicians to a sin-sick world. But, according to the interpretation now given of the preceding clause, it is their own recovery from moral lameness which is here prescribed to Christian Hebrews. And assuredly, to be cured oneself is an important qualification for dispensing the needful remedy to others. The personal experience of the right means, and of the successful realization, of a cure, trains a man for the use of such appliances in the case of others. How can a lame man be expected to go vigorously and heartily about the work of healing the diseased around him? And if, himself uncured, a man shall go and tell another how *he*, labouring under the same disease, is to be healed, may he not expect to be accosted with the taunt, "Physician, heal thyself?"

14. *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*

There are some men with whom it seems almost impossible to live in unbroken peace, if one is to live with them at all. And there are certain duties—such as Christian rebuke—the discharge of which is very apt

to occasion fierce and unkindly feeling in evil hearts. Accordingly, men are not absolutely required in Scripture to live in unviolated and unswerving peace with all men. In one text, it is said:—“*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men,*” (Rom. xii. 18); and here it is said, not, ‘Ever live in peace with all,’ but, “*Follow peace with all men*”—a precept similar to that, Psalm xxxiv. 14, “*Seek peace and pursue it.*”

And how must this precept be observed? how must a man “follow peace with all men?” He must cherish love towards all. He must resist in himself the principle of pride—that fruitful source of quarrels and dispeace. He must be kind and courteous, not only towards the powerful and the great, but towards the unknown and unnoticed of the world. He must be no moral salamander, courting, as his favourite element, the fire. Slow to rush into controversy, he must, if he have occasion to engage in it, conduct himself with mildness and moderation of feeling and expression. And if another party be aggrieved or exasperated, he must hasten to cast oil on the troubled waters. Thus must he do what the laws of humanity, and the gentle and generous spirit of Christianity, require; and thus, with a kindly aim, and by kindly means, he must “follow peace with all men.” Such a pursuit, and such a consummation, are fitted to keep the spirit free for tranquil intercourse with God, and to exhibit in a seemly and attractive aspect the religion of Jesus Christ.

But some there are who live very peaceable lives, and yet are far estranged from the service and fellowship of Heaven. And some there are who, because at peace with men, although far away from God, suppose that

they are safe. A warning call appropriate to such is given in the remainder of the verse. The Hebrews are required to follow after that spiritual devotedness to God—that practical consecration to his fear, and love, and service—which constitutes “holiness,” and are assured that without it “no man shall see the Lord.”

The expression “the Lord,” in the New Testament, habitually denotes the Mediatorial Christ. And so it may do in the present case. But the parallel text, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,” (Matt. v. 8)—the application made of the same expression in the quotation, ver. 5, 6, from the Book of Proverbs—and the fact that the Greek phrase employed is habitually given in the Septuagint as the translation of *Jehovah*, render it probable that in this verse God, rather than the Mediatorial Christ, is meant. It is true, however, absolutely true, that as, without the spiritual qualification here specified, no man shall enjoy the beatific vision of the Father, so, without it, no man shall enjoy a like vision of the once crucified, but now exalted, Son.

We are taught that every one who really, and in right earnest, believes in Jesus shall be admitted into heaven; and yet here it is declared, “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” But the two propositions are quite compatible. Justifying faith, in every case, “purifies the heart”—where the man remains unholy, he has not been justified from sin, he has not believed in Christ. And as sanctity is a necessary fruit and accompaniment of faith, so, from the nature of the case, unless a man be sanctified, he cannot distinctly apprehend and realize the glory of the Eternal Sire and of the Mediatorial Son, and even were he to enter heaven—which,

as being an unbeliever, he cannot, in his present condition, do—he could not there, with the angels and the white-robed sons of immortality, “behold the face” of God, and hold congenial fellowship with “the Prince of” purity and “peace.”

What a solemn admonition do these considerations give, of the danger to which all unsanctified sinners are exposed, and of the importance on the part of those in whom the sanctifying process is begun, of following after a larger and deeper experience of its power! Not to “see the Lord”—how sad, how terrible! To behold Him clearly with the eye of meditative faith on earth, and then to behold Him in the ecstasy of the beatific vision in a better world—how sweet, how glorious, how sublime!

15. *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; 16. Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. 17. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*

The word here rendered “Looking diligently” (*επισκοποῦντες*) means, *taking oversight*. It is a participle corresponding to the substantive translated in the New Testament, *Bishop*, and, *Overseer*. The Hebrew Christians were to exercise over themselves, and over one another, a moral episcopacy—a spiritual superintendence.

The first of the objects here prescribed for such pious and friendly oversight is this:—“lest any man fail of the grace of God.”

The "grace of God" here specified is that "grace which bringeth salvation." God, in the exercise of his sovereign and unmerited mercy, had provided glorious privileges for sinners, and had pressed them on the acceptance of those who are here addressed. It would have been a dreadful thing that any who had embraced those privileges should lose them; it would also have been a dreadful thing that any member of the visible Church, making a profession of religion and possessing many precious means of grace, should never attain the pardon of sin and the salvation of the soul. Against these sore evils the Christian Hebrews were to guard. Watching over their own individual souls, they were, as fellow-members of the Christian Commonwealth, by instruction, exhortation, rebuke, and other wise and kind appliances, to seek to guard one another's souls from danger—the awful danger of "failing of the grace of God."

A second evil, or second form of the same evil, is specified, in connection with the duty of taking a religious oversight, in the words:—"lest any root of bitterness, springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."

There is here an obvious reference to Deut. xxix. 18:—"Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood." In that text, the "root" is identified with a person, or class of persons, tending, by speech or action, to produce moral mischief. In the present passage, such a person, or class of persons, is probably meant. Still, it is in bad principles or practices that the dreaded evil lies. And because of the mischievous effects which such principles or practices, broached, or followed, by members of the Christian com-

munity were likely to produce, the "root" is called a "root of bitterness." "Springing up" suggests that, for a time, this noxious root might be concealed, and represents it as afterwards appearing to view, and, by becoming prominent and strong, becoming also peculiarly perilous. This "upspringing root" is represented as fitted to "trouble" the Christians. And it is obvious that it was likely to introduce and promote controversies and quarrels, to vex the hearts of the faithful, and to "beguile unstable souls." Its corrupting effect, and its tendency to diffuse its noxious influence, are denoted by the words, "and thereby many be defiled."

It is added, still in connection with the duty of taking an oversight:—"lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau."

There is no need of supposing, with Tholuck and Ebrard, not literal, but spiritual fornication, that is, religious apostacy, to be here meant. The Hebrews were to take care lest any of their number should be guilty of any of the forms of uncleanness; and, lest, in reference to any of them who should thus fall, the discipline of the Church should fail to be applied. This is a sin which specially degrades the character; and it is also a sin by which, left unchecked, the sacred community would be specially deformed. How pointedly and pungently is it inveighed against in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and in others of the Apostolic letters!

A "profane person" is one who scoffs at religion or makes light of sacred things. On the part of any moral and immortal creature of Almighty God, how monstrous so to do! How peculiarly monstrous on the part of a professed member of the Church of Christ!

And yet, of this sin there are examples in the history of the world. One of these is here specified—Esau, Isaac's elder son.

It might have been supposed, from his birth and education, that Esau would be, like Abraham and Isaac, a believer and a saint. And yet, he was "a profane person." One way in which he showed his profaneness is here specified:—"for one morsel of meat he sold his birthright." The right of primogeniture, under the law, comprehended a title to a double share of the paternal inheritance; but among the patriarchs it enclosed, as it were, the special privilege of having the promise of the glorious Seed fulfilled. The spiritual import of the birthright made it a profane thing on the part of Esau to "despise" it. It was in early life that, coming home hungry, he, at the price of this sacred privilege, bought from his brother Jacob "a morsel of meat"—a paltry plate of pottage. His hunger might be satisfied; but the honour and blessedness of his primogeniture were gone. Time passed away, and old Isaac's season came for pronouncing the patriarchal blessing on his sons. He meant for Esau the blessing of the first-born. But God had a different design, and, albeit by the folly and sinfulness of man, He wrought it out. In the sale of the birthright, the forfeiture of the blessing was involved; and now, the benediction meant for Esau descended on his brother's younger head. Bitterly did the former feel the loss; earnestly did he seek to have that loss retrieved. But, says the sacred writer, "he was rejected," and again, "he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears"—words which certainly do not mean, that Esau importunately longed to have repentance awakened in his heart, yet

could not attain that great result, but in which the sacred writer, referring to Gen. xxvii. 33, 38—where the tears of Esau and the irrevocableness of the blessing given to Jacob are set forth—affirms, that the former could not, by his weeping and importunity, prevail on Isaac to “repent,” that is, to reverse what he had done—to withdraw the blessing from Jacob, and bestow it on the elder brother after all.

What monitory views are these! They were certainly intended so to be. Alas! how many have “sold their birthright for a morsel of meat!” or, if that language be scarcely suitable, how many, for a paltry share of earth, are practically renouncing heaven! Sooner, or later, the folly of that procedure must be seen. The recognition of this, however, may come too late—too late to retrieve the mischief, too late for the final attainment of the rejected prize. In hell, the sinner will “find no place for repentance” in the heart of God; and there, the tears of terrible regret and fearful anticipation are not the expression of genuine repentance in the heart of man. But now, God “waiteth to be gracious”—the birthright is offered—the blessing is ready. O sinners, “turn ye, turn ye—why will ye die?”

18. *For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, 19. And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: 20. (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: 21. And so*

terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake :) 22. But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, 23. To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24. And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

In chapt. viii. 1, the sacred writer says, "Now, of the things which we have spoken this is the sum;" and so, he proceeds to give an abstract or summary of what he has said in the previous context respecting the priesthood of Christ. A considerable portion of the preceding part of this Epistle is occupied with a contrast between the Economy of the Gospel and the Economy of the Law; and, in reference to that part of his illustrations, the sacred writer would have given an accurate description if he had repeated the saying, "Now, of the things which we have spoken this is the sum." For the present passage is, as it were, a brief and vivid summary of what, in a previous portion of the letter, he has more largely taught on that interesting and important subject.

A very similar passage occurs Gal. iv. 22-26. There St. Paul, referring to Hagar, the handmaid, and Sarah, the wife, of Abraham—the one, the mother of Ishmael, the other, the mother of Isaac—represents the former as symbolical, or representative, of what he calls "Jerusalem which now is"—that is, the Jewish Economy, as it continued to be held and administered among the Jewish people—and the latter as symbolical, or representative, of what he calls "the Jerusalem which is

above"—a name strictly corresponding to that expression in the present passage, "the heavenly Jerusalem." The verbal parallelism between the two passages is enhanced by the identification, in that which occurs in the Epistle to the Galatians, of the existing Jerusalem, symbolized by Hagar, with mount Sinai—of which, indeed, the word *Hagar* is an Arabic name, as, by some interpreters, is supposed to be stated in the words, "This Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia." And that there, as here, it is meant to contrast the dispensation of the Law and the dispensation of the Gospel, is clear from that statement, ver. 24, "These are the two covenants."

The giving of the law is not the only event of commanding interest which occurred on the heights of Sinai. When Elijah fled from before the face of Jezebel, he found refuge in one of the rocky caves of Horeb; and there, and then, the Lord passed by before him. A mighty wind shivered the rocks and rent the mountains—but "the Lord was not in the wind." A fearful earthquake shook the wilderness, and made "the mountains to skip like rams and the little hills like lambs"—but "the Lord was not in the earthquake." A fire, more dreadful still, burst on the prophet's astonished eye—but "the Lord was not in the fire." The wind, the earthquake, and the fire were followed by a "still, small voice"—and the Lord was in the voice. Between this part of the experience of Elijah, and the case set forth in the present passage of the Epistle to the Hebrews, there is a strong dissimilarity, but also a striking resemblance. In the case of the giving of the law, the Lord was in the wind, the earthquake, and the fire; and as for "the voice of words" which was heard,

on that occasion, from Sinai's flaming top—it was great and terrible, and struck peculiar fear into the hearts of Israel. But still, while the terrors of the scene were such as, in the case of the prophet, were realized in the wind, the earthquake, and the fire, the scene which, in this passage of the Epistle, is set over against that of the giving of the law, corresponds, in the blandness and gentleness of its character, to the “still, small voice.” A voice is even here assigned to “the blood of sprinkling;” of which it is said, that it “speaketh better things than that of Abel.”

In this passage, the sacred writer does three things. He describes the Economy of the law, more especially in the circumstances in which it was ushered in, and affirms that to these the Christian Hebrews were not come; he describes the system of the Gospel, and affirms that they were come to *it*; and these two branches of his illustration he applies to the enforcement of certain duties prescribed in the previous context.

I. He describes the introduction of the Economy of the Law, and declares that the Christian Hebrews were not come to those alarming scenes and circumstances in which that Economy was introduced.

1. These scenes and circumstances—more fully recorded and described Exod. xix. 9-22, Deut. v. 22-26—are here set forth.

The enumeration begins with “the mount that might be touched and that burned with fire.”

Mountains are favourite and familiar objects in the word of God. Connected as Israel were, both in their own mountain-land, and in their transit from Egypt to Palestine, with specimens of these stately works of Heaven, and fitted as the mountains are—whether

clothed with soft luxuriance, or standing in dark and frowning majesty, or lifting their snow-capped foreheads to the sky—to arrest the attention, and to stir and elevate the mind; the sacred writers derive many figurative illustrations from these, as from other objects, of material nature. But it is not the *poetry* of the Bible only, but the *history* also, that is intimately associated with mountain-scenes. On hills many memorable events recorded in the word of God transpired. In some cases, the associations connected with such events are mild and bland—as in that of Jesus going up into a mountain to pray. In others, they are attractive from their grandeur—as in that of the Transfiguration on the mount. In others, they are wild and terrible—and such are those of the scene referred to in the present case.

Mount Sinai was distinguished by these two characteristics—that it was a peculiarly wild and rugged hill, and that it raised its giant-form in the midst of a waste and howling wilderness. In these respects, it harmonized with the general style and character of the occasion here referred to. But these two other facts are particularly mentioned with respect to the mountain of the law—(1.) That it “might be touched;” and (2.) That it “burned with fire.”

The phrase “that might be touched” probably refers to the prescription specified in this very passage—“If so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart.” But it is obviously introduced with a view to contradistinguish mount Sinai from the spiritual mountain of the Christian Church—the “mount Sion” afterwards spoken of. In passing along a range of glorious hills, or even gazing from afar on a mighty mass of mountain-scenery,

one is disposed to feel his own insignificance, and cry, 'In comparison of mighty and majestic things like these, O what am I!' And yet, the traveller or spectator to whom such a thought has been vividly suggested by the scene has been known forthwith to bethink himself—'But I am a man—I have an immaterial and immortal spirit beating in my breast—"the Almighty hath given me understanding;" and, therefore, I am mightier and more exalted than the mountains!' A similar contrast is suggested by the expression, "that might be touched," as here applied to Sinai. That was a palpable, a merely material, hill. But the Sion of the Christian Church is *spiritual*, and, as such, is nobler and more illustrious far.

"That burned with fire," is an expression which affirms one of the most striking facts respecting Sinai recorded in the parallel passages in Exodus and Deuteronomy. The word *volcano* might be applied to that burning mountain. But assuredly, the fact that, at the giving of the law, it "burned with fire" was no merely ordinary and natural event. The fire, according to the narratives in the Pentateuch, was either miraculously kindled or, by natural laws, associated, according to a Divine arrangement, with the supernatural utterance, at this precise time, of the Ten Commandments from the midst of that flaming fire.

Such is the description here given of the mountain on which the law was delivered. And what was the moral import of these features in the scene? They served to represent Jehovah as seated on his throne—of which the mountain might fitly constitute a material and terrestrial type or symbol; to exhibit Him in a character which is specified, in close connection with Sinai's

flaming summit, Deut. iv. 24, "The Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God"—a text obviously referred to in this very chapter of the Epistle, ver. 29, "Our God is a consuming fire;" and to illustrate that corresponding moral character of the law—a law, indeed, absolutely righteous and essentially beneficent, and yet to a guilty creature clothed with terrors—which Moses specifies, Deut. xxxiii. 2, "From his right hand went a *fiery* law for them."

Next, the sacred writer speaks of "blackness, and darkness, and tempest."

In the Mosaic account of the giving of the law, mount Sinai is said to have been "altogether in a smoke," and God is said to have "descended in a cloud," and, from the midst of the cloud, as well as from the midst of the fire, to have delivered the Ten Commandments. Probably the flame discharged a large amount of smoke; which might fill the atmosphere around, and envelope the hill itself, while a dark and majestic cloud formed the basement, so to speak, from which the fire mounted up towards heaven. The combination of the cloud and the smoke may account for the combination of the words "blackness" and "darkness." "Tempest" denotes the thunder-storm of which such emphatic mention is made in the Mosaic narrative—a storm which might add to the "blackness" and "darkness" of the awful, yet majestic, scene. This second feature in the spectacle presented at the heights of Sinai was well fitted to set forth, (1.) The truth that Jehovah dwells in mystery — that "clouds and darkness are round about Him;" and (2.) The fact that the legal system was, to a great extent, shadowy and obscure.

The "trumpet" whose "sound" is here specified

was, of course, not the literal instrument which ordinarily bears the name. But assuredly, on the solemn occasion specified, trumpet-tones were heard—some such deep and stirring sounds as a trumpet is accustomed to emit fell on the ears of Israel. The trumpet—which occupied an important place in the services of the Jewish law—was sometimes used to swell the general tide of song in honour of “the King of glory,” and sometimes, to summon to attention and to arrest the mind. The latter was obviously the design contemplated when, amidst the other mysteries of Sinai, “the trumpet sounded loud and long.” Thus, and therefore, did the trumpet sound at the dawn of the Hebrew Jubilee. The two occasions—how like, and yet how different!

“The voice of words” was the audible utterance of God. Jehovah spake, as if from the summit of the hill, “out of the midst of the cloud and of the fire.” There, and thence, He delivered the Decalogue to the assembled people. A voice, how startling and how strange! a gift, how precious, and yet how dread!

One particular Divine prescription is here specified:—“If so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart.” This prescription denoted, how solemn a thing it was to have to do with God, and how impossible a thing for man, as guilty and unforgiven, to stand before his face.

2. The sacred writer describes the effect produced on Moses and the people by the scenes and sounds of Sinai.

This is exhibited in three particulars:—(1.) The Israelites “entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more;” (2.) “They could not endure” the awful interdict respecting the destruction of

the man or beast that should "touch the mountain;" and (3.) "So terrible was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake."

The dreadful signs of Jehovah's peculiar presence were fitted to agitate the minds of Israel. The import of the Decalogue, as addressed to consciously guilty and rebellious men, was likely to disturb their consciences and stir their fears. And although Moses was a "good and faithful servant" of the Lord, *he*, too, was liable to be awed by supernal splendour, and he, too, was sensible of sin.

Even now, although, as the sacred writer goes on to state, a blander and milder dispensation has burst upon the world, and although the Christian believer has found shelter for his soul in the sacrifice and righteousness of God's Incarnate Son, yet, brought, as he sometimes is, into peculiarly close and personal contact with the violated law of God, he is awe-struck, and, it may be, sore afraid. Feeling how vast is the interval between his own attainments and the requirements of Heaven's inviolable law, and realizing the truth, "Our God is a consuming fire;" even *he*, perhaps, occasionally fears the worst, and if, in the simplicity and strength of Christian faith, he distinctly looks to Christ, and knows that, in respect of ultimate salvation, he is eternally secure, yet, realizing the infinite purity of his Father in the heavens, and remembering that this Father sometimes sorely chastens those whom He warmly loves, may thus pour forth the feelings of his heart:—"I heard thy speech, and was afraid;" "My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments."

And when a soul becomes truly sensible of its own corruption, guilt, and danger—when it looks upwards to

an all-perfect God, backwards on an ill-spent life, and forwards to a dark eternity—it sometimes feels as the people did before the terrors of that flaming mountain, and becomes itself the seat of the fiery flame, the impending darkness, and the roaring thunder, of that awful hill. A sore experience! And yet, how good and glorious will the issue be, if that sense of danger drive, or draw, the trembling sinner to the Cross, and “the storm be turned into a calm” at the voice of Him who said to the winds and waves of the troubled lake, “Peace, be still!”

But a day more dread than that of Sinai is yet to burst upon the world. “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him,” (Psal. 1. 3). “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire,” (2 Thess. i. 7, 8). “Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him,” (Rev. i. 7). More strange and startling far than those of Sinai shall be the elemental signs of that tremendous day; and to each, to all, it is the day of eternal destiny. Thousands, millions, will then “exceedingly fear and quake.” The rocks will fall, and the mountain-tops will bow; but they will not be able to hide their wretched suppliants “from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne.” The earth will reel—and so will *they*, these sinners unforgiven, unsanctified, unsaved. The heavens will be removed—and so will *they*, but not into nonentity, but into regions of fiery flame and black despair. “The trumpet shall sound”—to thee, O believing child of God, the trumpet of eternal jubilee—to his enemies, the summons into the presence of a righteous and

avenging Deity. And "the voice of words"—that will be the sentence, "Come, ye blessed," to the just, and the sentence of curse and condemnation to the bad. How, O how, will sinners then unjustified be able to endure that which shall be spoken? Fly, sinner, fly, from the impending storm—fly to the Cross and the Covenant of Christ.

3. Of the Christian Hebrews it is here affirmed, that they were not come to the sights and sounds of terror which the passage so vividly describes.

True, they had still to do with the law of God. The Ten Commandments they were bound as much as ever to obey. The very grace of the Gospel was a powerful reason for obeying them. But, *historically*, they did not witness the awful scenes which flashed before the eyes, and the startling voices which resounded on the ears, of their ancient fathers, and *morally*, they, as members of the visible Church of Christ, were called away from the "fiery law" as a covenant of works, and, if believers, were no more under it in that awful character and relation—no longer subject to the curse of the violated law of Heaven, nor required to work out for themselves eternal life by perfect and unfaltering obedience to its rules. "I, through the law," says St. Paul, "am dead to the law, that I might live unto God," (Gal. ii. 19); and again, "Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God," (Rom. vii. 4); and yet again, "Now, we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held, that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter," (Rom. vii. 6).

II. The sacred writer describes the Economy of Christ, and affirms that to that Economy the Christian Hebrews were come.

1. He specifies certain objects in the Christian Economy.

The enumeration commences with "Mount Sion, and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem."

Some interpreters might be inclined to separate between the mountain and the city, and seek to find a specific counterpart to each. It is surely safer and better, however, to view the two together, and thus to trace a clear and comprehensive resemblance between the Christian constitution, on the one hand, and the city built on the summit and the slopes of Sion, or the hill with the city surmounting it, on the other. In the material landscape, the city and the hill would be contemplated together; and so let it be in the spiritual landscape too.

In many of the prophetic descriptions of the Christian dispensation, the name *Sion* is employed; and it has been reasonably supposed that, in some, if not all, of such cases, the Sion meant is, as here, not the literal mountain on which Jerusalem stood, but the Church of Christ. It is true, that Christianity may be considered as starting on its glorious race from the heights of the Hebrew Sion; but when its future triumphs are associated with Sion, it seems as if the name were figuratively used. In the present case, at any rate, it must be viewed as metaphorical, and an interpreter is called to trace a parallelism, or resemblance, between the literal and the figurative, the material and the spiritual, mount. Nor is it difficult to see that there is a close analogy between the two. Sion was a fair and fruitful hill,

whence vast and animating views might be attained of the scenery around; and so, from the elevation which the Christian Economy affords, man may look upwards, and on every side, on the mighty panorama of the moral universe. Sion was the chosen residence of God; and as for the Church of his Anointed Son—"Why do ye leap, ye high hills? this is the hill which the Lord desireth to dwell in, yea, the Lord will dwell in it forever." Sion was the seat of Divine ordinances, inasmuch as it was there that David enshrined in the sacred Tabernacle which he had raised the ark of God, and there, too—that is, on Mount Moriah, one section or division of the double hill which very generally bore the single name of Sion—that Solomon reared the Temple; and so, it is within the limits of the Christian Church, that the true-hearted worshippers of God find access to "the holiest of all," and "have boldness" to enter in. Finally, on Sion stood Jerusalem; and so, with the spiritual hill is here associated "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem."

The resemblance of the Church of Christ to a city consists of several particulars. A city is the seat of riches; and within the Church are gathered treasures of moral wealth—wealth more precious than that of all the mines of earth, than even the riches of a thousand worlds. A city is the haunt of grandeur; and the spiritual grandeurs of the Church outvie, not only the emblazonry of nobles and the courts of kings, but the gorgeous galaxy of stars. A city involves society and social intercourse; and the Church embraces a mighty multitude of human souls and angelic spirits, united together by common character, by common aims, by common pursuits, and by common destinies. A city

involves immunities; and high and noble are the privileges and prerogatives of the denizens of Christ's own Commonwealth. A city is the scene of business; and believers are called to a great work, and seeking, in the strength of their Saviour-King, diligently and successfully to perform it.

But this spiritual Economy is not only a "city"—it is "the city of the living God." Jehovah built it—Jehovah inhabits it—Jehovah protects its citizens, and dispenses its affairs. This glorious Architect, Inhabitant, and King, by the word "living," is not only distinguished from idol-gods, but also exhibited as competent, in the exercise of that Divine and measureless Vitality which essentially pertains to Him, to carry on triumphantly the work He undertakes—to heap salvation on the Sion of his choice and the people of his charge.

The name "Jerusalem" denotes the same thing as "the city of the living God." In some sense, this noble title was realized in the earthly Jerusalem; and accordingly, that city is expressly referred to in order still further to represent the characteristic privileges and glories of the Christian Church. Many a city which has adorned by its splendour, enlightened by its wisdom, or moved by its arms, the world we live in, awakens the sweet or solemn memories of the soul. Athens, Rome, and other names of scarcely inferior interest, are wont to fall upon the ear with magic power. But which among the cities of the ancient earth can compare with Salem, "the city of the great King?" And not only for what it was, and did, and saw, and suffered, is it dear to the Christian's heart; but also for what it represents, as the symbol of that grander, goodlier, system with which are associated his happiness on earth and his hopes of heaven.

The very name "heavenly" is here assigned to the spiritual city. And well may it be so—even as, in the Gospels, "the kingdom of God" is frequently called "the kingdom of heaven." The Economy of Christ had its origin in Him whose throne is in the heavens. A large proportion of the objects with which that Economy is conversant belong to heaven. Many of the citizens of this better Jerusalem are now in that lofty land. Those of them who still linger here are on the way to its bright abodes. And even *they* may already cry, "Our citizenship (*πολίτευμα*) is in heaven," (Philip. iii. 20).

Guided by the graphic and striking representation given in the present passage, the friends and followers of Christ are free to describe by such passages as these—albeit certain of them may properly refer to the Jerusalem of old—the blessed Commonwealth into which, by Christian faith, they have been introduced:—"The Lord hath chosen Sion, He hath desired it for his habitation: This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it;" "Jerusalem is builded as a city which is compact together;" "They of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth;" "Cry out, and shout, thou inhabitant of Sion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee;" "We have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks;" "The ransomed of the Lord shall . . . come to Sion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Psalm cxxxii. 13, 14, cxxii. 3, lxxii. 16; Isa. xii. 6, xxvi. 1, xxxv. 10.)

Next is specified "an innumerable company of angels." It is even in reference to these that Knapp, Stuart, and

many other interpreters, understand the word rendered "general assembly" (*πᾶνγύρεσι*)—a word which denotes a multitude engaged in the celebration of a festival. The regular connection of the successive clauses of ver. 22-24 by the conjunction "and" is in favour of this application. The whole expression would thus run—*"and to myriads, the gladsome company of angels."*

It may seem strange that angels should be spoken of as if they were members of the Christian Commonwealth. Of course, Christ is not a Mediator between God and angels, in the same way as He is a Mediator between God and men. But Christ, the Mediatorial Christ, is Head of angels, as truly as He is Head of men, and He has brought believers and the unfallen spirits of the heavens into a certain close and brotherly connection under himself as common Lord and King. St. Paul says:—"It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven," (Col. i. 19, 20). And St. Peter:—"Who is gone into heaven; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto Him," (1 Pet. iii. 22).

That it may be properly perceived how great is the privilege of "having come to the innumerable company of angels," it is important to realize their surpassing glory. Their dwelling-place is glorious—the heaven where Jehovah has reared his throne. Their character is glorious—they "have kept their principality," they never fell, they are innocent and pure. Their powers are glorious—they "excel in strength," and, as they are strong to act, so they are vigorous in thought.

Their pursuits are glorious—they “behold the Father’s face,” and “do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word.” Their enjoyments are glorious—they drink of the “rivers of pleasure” which are “before God’s face,” the “fulness of joy” which is “at his right hand.” (Psalm xci. 11, 12, ciii. 20; Matt. xviii. 10, xxv. 31; 2 Thess. i. 7; &c.)

The epithet “innumerable,” corresponding to *μυριάων* in the original, combines with certain other texts—such as Deut. xxxiii. 2, “He came with ten thousands of saints;” Psalm lxviii. 17, “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels;” Dan. vii. 10, “Thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him”—to represent the number of the good angels as immensely great. Amidst the wild and wicked rebellion which so many are waging against God, it is consolatory to think that not only will a mighty multitude of ransomed souls for ever celebrate his praise, but even now angelic songs are bursting on his ear

“ Loud as from numbers without number, sweet
As from blest voices uttering joy.”*

And the idea that the angels are “an innumerable company” is fitted to enhance the sweetness and sublimity of the thought that believers “are come to” them.

Next in the series of objects specified is “the Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven.”

The name “First-born” is applied in the New Testament to Christ. Here, however, it is in the plural, and therefore denotes, not Christ, but the members of “the Church” made mention of.

* Milton.

But what class of persons is thus described? The phrase is often cited as if it denoted the glorified inhabitants of heaven. But these are obviously denoted by those other expressions—"an innumerable company of angels," and, "the spirits of just men made perfect." The words, "of the first-born," may naturally suggest the earlier saints—those who lived before Messiah's advent, many of whom are so honourably mentioned in the 11th chapter of this Epistle. But surely these were now among "the spirits of just men made perfect." The Church on earth, then—the company of believers who were still alive—must be what is meant by the present part of the description.

But why are they called "the Church of the first-born?" Among the Jews the first-born son had special privileges; and the characteristic privileges of believers may be here referred to. But it is simpler and more natural to understand the name "first-born" as here assigned to the primitive Church as being the first gatherings to the spiritual Commonwealth of Christ. They were omens of a glorious harvest; yet they themselves were but the first-fruits.

The phrase "which are written in heaven"—a phrase which, instead of showing that the persons meant were already in that better world, seems rather to indicate the opposite—has a reference to the custom of registering the names of citizens, and is illustrated by what is said in the Apocalypse respecting "the Lamb's Book of life," (Rev. xiii. 8, xx. 12 15, xxi. 27). The names of believers, when they become the Lord's, are recorded, as it were, in his inviolable register. That book is to be opened at the last assize. If the name of any one shall then be found recorded there, he shall be admitted and

welcomed to bright abodes of everlasting bliss. If the name of any one be wanting, "he shall be cast into the lake of fire." How solemn an alternative! A distinction, how mighty! how momentous!

The next object in the series is "God the Judge of all."

When Solomon had "set his heart to seek and search out by wisdom all things that were done under the sun"—when, with comprehensive view, he had surveyed the various forms and aspects which Divine Providence and human experience assumed in this strange and chequered scene of things—he "said in his heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked," (Eccles. iii. 17). Even heathen sages, in contemplating a like scene, have come to a like conclusion. Nor is the argument unsound. If we are all "under law to God," and responsible to Him for whatever we are and for whatever we do—if we are all linked in moral relations to one another, and, in spite of those relations, the social condition of affairs is violated and disturbed by the follies and passions of mankind—if, in the present state of things, happiness and misery are, by no means, regularly proportioned to the moral distinctions among men—and if the doctrine of a judgment be essential to the maintenance of peace and order in the earth—it seems reasonable to infer that such a judgment there will actually be. What Reason suggests Revelation confirms; and it also exhibits, in connection with future judgment, a variety of solemn and momentous facts which unaided Reason never could disclose. From the beginning to the end of the Bible, the doctrine of the present text is taught—that "God is the Judge of all"—that as He sees us now, so He will call us to account

hereafter, and that sentence will pass, and destiny for good or evil take effect, on all, from Adam to his last-born child.

And O, how solemn is the doctrine of the judgment, even in the simple form in which it is here proposed! That every man, woman, and child shall be examined, sentenced, doomed, by God—by Him who cannot be deceived, whose justice is inviolable, whose dislike to sin is absolute, and who holds at his command, and under his control, all the resources which infinite wisdom can provide or the arm of Omnipotence can wield—how terrible, and yet how true! The Mediatorial Christ, indeed will be the visible Judge of men. “We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ,” (Rom. xiv. 10). But—not to insist on the fact that Christ is God—it is not to be supposed that, in assigning the judicial functions to the Son, the Father has divested himself of his own prerogative to judge the world, any more than, in putting into the Messiah’s hands the government of all the universe, He has swept his own universal providence away. St. Paul, accordingly, declares that “God hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained,” (Acts xvii. 31); and so, it is to be understood that what the Mediatorial Christ shall say and do and determine in that day of doom, shall be said and done and determined by the Eternal Father too. Then, “God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing,” and, “according to the deeds done in the body,” will determine the destinies of all mankind. (Eccl. xii. 14; Rom. ii. 6.)

In other texts, the solemnity of the future judgment is still further illustrated by kindred facts. The

heavens shall open, and the Mediatorial Representative of God shall visibly appear in stately majesty. At the sound of the archangel's trumpet—which shall penetrate, with its agitating blast, the dark caverns of the mountains, and the darker caverns of the graves—they shall come, the men of every generation and of every land. From the cradle of mankind, where, soon as the sentence was gone forth, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," men began to sink into their mother-earth—from those teeming continents where nations without number, and almost without names, from generation to generation shall have laid them down to die—from the rocky sepulchres of Palestine—from the green church-yards of England—from the populous city's wilderness of graves—from the silent solitude of hills—from the deep, dark caves of ocean—they shall come, a mighty, an awfully mighty, multitude, and, every risen body linked in union to its now returning soul, shall stand before "the great white throne." Each, as if there were none other to be judged, shall have his fate determined in that last assize. The sentence pronounced, the appointed and eternal destiny succeeds. To heaven, to hell, respectively, the two mighty congregations pass away. And so, the dooms of men are sealed, and the mystery of Time is ended.

O my soul, wilt thou be able to stand the scrutiny of that decisive day? And thou, my brother, wilt thou then abide such tests as these:—Believed he, or believed he not, the Gospel? Was he, or was he not, the child of God? Lived he, or lived he not, the life of faith, and godliness, and love? "Come," sinner, come, while yet thou mayest, in penitence and confidence and hope, "to God, the Judge of all."

The sacred writer goes on to specify "the spirits of just men made perfect."

This is not, by any means, the only text in which Scripture distinguishes between body and spirit in speaking of the world to come. Some, indeed, have dared to hold that the power of thought is essentially dependent on material organization, and that, therefore, when the body goes down into the dust, man, as a being capable of thought and susceptible of feeling, ceases to be. But, even on the principles of reason, no modification of matter can possibly account for the phenomena of the mind; and Scripture is decisive as to a constitutional and essential distinction between the body and the soul. Certain of the texts which it contains relative to the intermediate state decidedly point to this distinction. Solomon says, speaking of the close of life:—"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it," (Eccl. xii. 7). St. Paul speaks of being "present with the Lord" when "absent from the body," and expresses "a desire to depart and be with Christ—which," says he, "is far better," (2 Cor. v. 6, 8; Philip. i. 23). And here, mention is made of "the spirits of just men made perfect" as objects to which the Christian Hebrews had already "come."

As "made perfect" denotes the characteristic glory of believers in the better world, so "just men" is to be understood of what they were before they entered it. The relation of parts seems to require this application of the latter expression. Moreover, the word rendered "made perfect" (*τετελειωμένων*) is a word which was applied to the honourable termination of the race or wrestle in the ancient games, and probably here,

in accordance with ver. 1, 2, refers to the recompence of one who had "run with patience the race that was set before him." At any rate, it is the habitual doctrine of the New Testament that only those who are justified and sanctified on earth shall inherit the "glory, honour, and immortality" of heaven.

"Made perfect" does not here mean that, in the intermediate state, believers are in their final state of blissful consummation. It is obvious that, so long as the body lingers in the dust, man, in his complete nature, is not, by any means, absolutely perfect. Probably, even the soul will gain by being united to its resurrection-body. And not till the day of judgment will the full and final glorification of believers be formally determined and publicly displayed. But still, saints departed are in glory. They have reached the goal, and received a crown. They are holding friendly and happy fellowship with Christ; and that both supposes and sustains the sanctity and moral elevation of their ransomed and regenerated souls. How glorious, and how happy, they—these "spirits of the just made perfect!" How hopeful and blessed *we*, if we faithfully follow in their steps! To be "looking unto Jesus," in the exercise of faith, and "running the race," in the exercise of active vigour and stedfast "patience," is a pledge and token of the final attainment of the prize. But only they who are "just" here shall stand among the "perfected" hereafter.

Next in the series is "Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant."

The name "Jesus" represents the salvation which Christ has purchased and the purchase-price which He has paid. And O, in relation to God as "the Judge

of all," and to the destinies of human "spirits" in the world to come, how expressive, how appropriate is the selected name of *Jesus*! Christ's adaptation to the case and condition of the sinner is still further denoted by the title "the Mediator of the new covenant." In connection with former chapters of the Epistle, this title has—virtually, at least—already been explained. The "new covenant" is the Economy of Christ. That Economy is vastly different from the Economy of Moses, whether this more ancient system be considered as, strictly and exclusively, a covenant of works, proposing as the only terms of acceptance perfect obedience to the precepts of the law, and denouncing curse on "every one who continued not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them," or be viewed as embracing the typical symbolism which the New Testament represents as involved in the Levitical dispensation. And of that new and better Economy Christ is "the Mediator," as transacting, in connection with it, between God and man, in the characters of Prophet, Priest, and King.

The series of particulars concludes with "the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel."

In connection with a previous part of the Epistle, it has already been explained how the blood of Jesus is "the blood of sprinkling." At the institution of the passover, at the ratification of the Mosaic covenant, on the great day of expiation, and even on more ordinary occasions, the blood of sacrifice was sprinkled, whether on living persons, or on inanimate objects with which they had to do. So, as it were, is the blood of Jesus sprinkled on the persons of believers, on the lintels and

door-posts of their dwellings, on the book of the Christian covenant, and on the very "vessels of the ministry." These, each and all, have an interest, for good, in the life-blood of the Lamb. On these, each and all, his propitiatory sacrifice is brought to bear. As for believers personally—by that blood, their sins are pardoned, their souls are sanctified, and their consciences are visited with peace.

Some interpreters of later times have supposed that in the expression "which speaketh better things than that of Abel" the blood of Abel's sacrifice is meant. But it is fatal to this ingenious idea, that in the expression there is a manifest reference to Jehovah's address to Cain, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground," (Gen. iv. 10), and that, in so far as the blood of Abel's sacrifice spoke at all, it spoke the same things—*typically*, of course—as the blood of Christ. "The blood of Abel," then, is the blood of that early saint himself—the blood which was shed by his brother Cain. That cried to God for vengeance—the blood of Jesus cries to Heaven for mercy. And as its peaceful voice goes up to the ears of God, so it blandly speaks to the soul of man. Even to thee, O sinner, its tones are gentle, and its words are kind. But O remember, to despise and reject it is an awful crime, and will entail a dreadful and disastrous doom.

2. In enumerating the objects which have now been glanced at, the sacred writer affirms that the Christian Hebrews were "come to" them.

In one sense, all who hear the message of the Gospel have come to this glorious aggregate of illustrious persons and attractive things. But alas! of these many are standing, like the Israelites—not, however, by com-

mand of God, but in rebellious disobedience to his call—afar off. And yet, to hear the tidings, and to see the sights, at all, is a privilege, for which gratitude is due. But more, far more is needed—more, far more, is offered. And O, if the sinner would fly, by faith, to the cross of Jesus, and, by prayer, to the mercy-seat of God, in a higher and happier sense by far would the statement be fulfilled—“Ye are come” to these.

In this sense, all the believing Hebrews had actually come to them—in this sense, all among ourselves who, really and in right earnest, believe in Christ have come. They have entered into a close, friendly, and permanent connection with them all. They realize them clearly, and are even mixed up, as it were, with the mighty and majestic throng. And what a privilege is this! As having “come to mount Sion” and “the heavenly Jerusalem,” they are “citizens of no mean city.” As having “come to the Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven,” they have become members of a blessed family. As having “come to the spirits of just men made perfect” and to “an innumerable company of angels,” they have, as it were, already been exalted to the heaven where they are destined, in living person, afterwards to dwell. As having “come to God the Judge of all,” they have secured, by a personal and eternal interest in his noble and beatific friendship, a security for “boldness in the day of judgment,” and a token that, when the Universal Judge descends, they may “lift up their heads with joy, knowing that” the consummation of their glory “draweth nigh.” As having “come to Jesus” and to “the blood of sprinkling,” they “have washed their robes and made them white,” and obtained a pledge that

they shall “stand before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in his temple.”

Alas that, in a way like this, and with results like these, so few comparatively should seem to have come to the objects here described! But better days are coming. It is written:—“In Jacob, and in his seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed,” (Gen. xxviii. 14); “To Shiloh shall the gathering of the people be,” (Gen. xlix. 10); “It shall come to pass, in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Sion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem,” (Isa. ii. 2, 3). Our Christian Sion shall yet be “the Sion of the whole earth,” and her Temple “an house of prayer for all nations.” “Behold,” says one of our Christian poets, summing up the import, and appropriating much of the phraseology, of certain bright prophetic passages—

“Behold the measure of the promise filled!
 See Salem built, the labour of a God!
 Bright as a sun the sacred city shines;
 All kingdoms and all princes of the earth
 Flock to that light; the glory of all lands
 Flows into her; unbounded is her joy,
 And endless her increase. Thy rams are there,
 Nebaioth, and the flocks of Kedar there;
 The looms of Ormus, and the mines of Ind,
 And Saba’s spicy groves pay tribute there.
 Praise is in all her gates. Upon her walls,
 And in her streets, and in her spacious courts,
 Is heard salvation. Eastern Java there

Kneels with the native of the farthest west,
And Ethiopia spreads abroad the hand
And worships. Her report has travelled forth
Into all lands. From every clime they come
To see thy beauty, and to share thy joy,
O Sion! an assembly such as earth
Saw never, such as heaven stoops down to see.*

A still grander epoch in the history of the Church is described in the 21st chapter of the Book of Revelation. The ingathering of God-begotten souls to Paradise from age to age, and the consummation, in the last assize, of the mystery of Time, shall prepare for the realization of what 'he who saw the Apocalypse' beheld with prophetic eye. "I John," says he, "saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." And so, onwards, and onwards still, he sets forth grand and glowing views of that "city of the Lord." How glorious it needs must be to enter its angel-guarded gates, and, compassed round with its jasper-walls, to dwell in its golden homes, to walk in its crystal-light, to roam on the margin of its bright transparent stream, and to "taste and see" that "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying"—that "God himself shall be with" the assembled citizens, "and be their God"—that "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it"—that "they shall see" their Father's "face"—that "there shall be no night there"—and that "they shall reign for ever and ever!" But it is written—"There shall in nowise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Rev. xxi., xxii.)

* Cowper.

III. By the introductory word "For" in ver. 18, the representation given of Christian privilege in this passage is brought to bear, as an argument and motive, on the duties specified in the previous context.

In that context, the sacred writer guards the Christian Hebrews against apostatizing from the faith and profession of the Gospel; against being weary and faint-hearted in the discharge of the duties, or the endurance of the trials, to which they were called; and against sinking into the sensual indulgences of an evil world. And now, he enforces their duty in these respects by telling them, from what they had been delivered, and into what they had been introduced. That there are force and suitableness in this practical appeal is clear.

1. How foolish would it have been to apostatize from the condition which they had attained!

Delivered as they were from the curse of the violated law, would it not have been most unreasonable to incur that curse again? Partakers as they were of the noble and blessed privileges of citizens of Sion, children of God, and heirs of glory, would it not have been excessive folly, outrageous madness, to renounce those privileges, as if they were mean and worthless things? What! is it desireable to be morally degraded and spiritually wretched? are the peerage of the soul, the nobility of heaven, the freedom from evil infinite, and the present possession and well-assured hopes of life eternal, fit to be rejected or despised?

2. There is here an appeal to the claims of gratitude.

The benefits described were precious; and those benefits were the gifts of God. Even to have come in respect of outward religious opportunities to the Christian Church was a boon for which gratitude was due;

and they who had done so were imperatively bound, under the influence of thankfulness to Heaven, to appreciate and apply what Heaven had so graciously bestowed. And to have spiritually come to mount Sion, and the glorious inhabitants and vast immunities of that sacred hill—what a noble privilege was that! what a clear exhibition of the love and generosity of God! what an urgent call to love Him in return, and, under the sweet and strong constraint of gratitude, to maintain his cause, to defend his kingdom, to keep his commandments, to glorify his name! To fail of doing so, would surely have been base ingratitude.

3. The privileges here described afforded sublime encouragement to discharge the duties, however arduous, and to sustain the trials, however severe, to which these Christian Hebrews might be called.

What! were they the citizens of Sion, the companions of angels, the friends of Christ, the beloved ones of God—washed in the blood of atoning sacrifice, begotten of the Holy Ghost, and destined to a blessed immortality—and would they, notwithstanding, murmur and complain at the passing ills of life?—would they not, with high and happy hearts, proceed on their heavenward way?—would they not boldly do their Master's work, and meekly bear their Lord's reproach, and make Sion's echoes ring with the hymns and halleluiahs of their praise?

4. To promote sanctification is an end expressly aimed at in the grant of Christian privilege and in the work of mercy by which such privilege was provided.

Was St. Paul "dead to the law?" It was that he "might live unto God," (Gal. ii. 19). Were the Christian Romans "become dead to the law by the body of

Christ?" It was "that they might be married to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead, that they might bring forth fruit unto God," (Rom. vii. 4). Were they "delivered from the law?" It was "that they might serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter," (Rom. vii. 6). And it is written of Christ, Tit. ii. 14 :—"He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

By these various considerations let the followers of Christ be moved. And so, let his disciples serve Him—let the comrades of angels emulate their songs—let the children of the Highest glorify their Father—let the citizens of Sion be the noble champions of a noble cause.

25. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven; 26. Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. 27. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

The sacred writer, following up and applying the solemnizing and animating views presented in ver. 18-24, distinguishes between the communication of the Law and the announcement of the Gospel—urges practical regard to Him who addresses to us the latter—points out the danger of failing to do so—enforces the duty, and proves the danger, by a reference to certain remarkable movements accompanying the two contrasted events

—and explains what is meant in a prophetic passage in which the latter is foretold.

I. He distinguishes, by the phrases “him that spake on earth” and “Him that speaketh from heaven,” between the giving of the Law and the declaration of the Gospel.

“Him that spake on earth” seems to denote Moses. And who is He that is said to “speak from heaven?” He, as is taught in ver. 26, “whose voice,” at the giving of the law, “shook the earth,” and who, in Haggai ii. 6, declares that He will shake “not the earth only, but also heaven.” Now, it was Jehovah himself that shook mount Sinai, and the prediction in Haggai is ushered in with the words—“Thus saith the Lord of hosts.” But how does God “speak from heaven?” By the mission and mediation of his Son, and by the appointment and inspiration of the “apostles of the Lamb” and of other Divinely-commissioned and Divinely-qualified ministers.—Some suppose, and with reason, that the antithesis is best preserved by considering Christ as “Him that speaketh from heaven;” and Owen, who thus interprets the expression, infers the Divinity of Jesus from the associated phrase, ver. 26, “Whose voice then shook the earth.”

II. The sacred writer requires the Christian Hebrews to “see that they refuse not Him that speaketh.”

In this exhortation, the phrase “Him that speaketh” must obviously be defined, in its reference and application, by the more extended expression, “Him that speaketh from heaven.” And if God himself be the Speaker, how foolish, ungrateful, and rebellious to refuse! But the fact that He “speaketh *from heaven*”—from his glorious and uplifted throne—and the collateral

fact that what He speaks is a merciful and majestic message, expressive of his kind regards to his alienated and apostate creatures, and admirably fitted, if welcomed and embraced, to promote their highest welfare, render it still more monstrous folly, ingratitude, and rebellion, to turn away from *it* and from Him that utters it. And yet, how many are actually doing so—refusing God—refusing the doctrines of the Christian Gospel, and the precepts of the Christian Law—and thus despising God, rejecting salvation, and “treasuring up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath!”

Against such conduct the Christian Hebrews are here admonished. If, indeed, they were true believers, they would not, absolutely and utterly, turn away from the heavenly Speaker. But, under the guise of a Christian profession, many are refusing Jehovah and the message of his grace—believers themselves are in danger of committing, to some extent, the terrible sin of refusing God—and to put them on their guard, by exhortation and threatening on the subject, is one of God’s wisely-chosen ways of keeping them back from complete and final apostacy. There is force even in the words “See that.” They require vigilance and effort to be used. Men must “watch and pray,” and diligently employ such other means as are fitted to preserve them from turning away from the glorious Speaker.

III. The sacred writer points out the danger of “turning away from Him that speaketh:”—“If they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven.”

The Mosaic Law was accompanied with threatenings of destruction to such as slighted and disobeyed it; and

the Books of Exodus and Numbers contain several dreadful records of the infliction on such of the threatened punishment. An epitome of those records is given in 1 Cor. x. 5-10. From these events, and the constitution of things under which they came to pass, is here deduced the certainty of more terrible destruction to such as renounce the Christian Economy of grace and salvation. In that parallel passage, chapt. ii. 2-4, the conclusion as to the danger of this class of men is grounded on the greatness of the benefits which Christianity reveals and offers and communicates—the dignity of the Person by whom it was ushered in—and the mighty miraculous confirmation it received in the ministry of “them that heard Him.” Here stress is laid, not only on the fact that it was spoken by One so glorious, but on the fact that it was “from heaven” that it was addressed to men by Him from whose infallible wisdom and overflowing mercy it proceeds.

IV. The sacred writer still further enforces on the Christian Hebrews the duty of “seeing that they refuse not Him that speaketh,” by suggesting a contrast between certain movements signaling, respectively, the epoch of the Law and the epoch of the Gospel:—“Whose voice then shook the earth; but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more, I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.”

At the giving of the law, mount Sinai “quaked greatly,” (Exod. xix. 18); and the physical earthquake which then occurred—described in poetic and striking terms in Psalm cxiv.—is unquestionably referred to here. The statement “His voice then shook the earth,” however,—in accordance with the analogy of the remainder of the verse, which certainly includes something.

else than a physical convulsion—may denote the general excitement and agitation which signalized the giving of the law. That occasion was characterized by supernatural signs, one of which was this—that an articulate voice, Jehovah's voice, was heard. To "the voice of the Lord," however, are traced, in Psalm **xxix.** 3-9, a variety of mighty and majestic phenomena in the natural world. A thunder-storm seems to be the pervading subject of that animated and sublime description.

If it were the second advent of Christ that was predicted in the passage here quoted from Haggai (chapt. ii. 6), a literal fulfilment might be found in the fact that, on that great occasion, "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up," (2 Pet. iii. 10). But the expressions, "The Desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory," (Haggai ii. 7), identify the time foretold with that of the first advent of Messiah. Moreover, the manifest object and reference of the sacred writer in making and applying the quotation require that the period in which Christianity was introduced should be understood. How, then, in connection with that period, was the prophecy fulfilled? The nativity of Jesus was attended by celestial signs. A strange star appeared, and guided the Magi to the birthplace of the glorious Child; and in mid-air a choir of angels chaunted his birth-day song. In these events, however, there was no literal shaking of the heavens. Some mighty moral and social change must needs be meant by the bold and striking language quoted from the Hebrew seer; and it is quite in accordance with

the symbolic and figurative style of prophecy so to understand his words. That they are to be thus figuratively understood is virtually affirmed in ver. 27.

V. In that verse it is explained what is denoted by the prophetic text referred to:—"And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."

Here, it is manifest, the prediction is applied to a great and decisive change in the religious constitution of the world. One order of things is represented as passing away; and another order of things as, by the abrogation of the former, effectually introduced, and as destined to be permanent. By the one is manifestly meant, the Economy of the Law; by the other, the Economy of the Gospel. This sense corresponds to the pervading doctrine of the Epistle—to the representations given in other parts of the New Testament of the difference, in character and duration, between the Jewish and the Christian dispensations—and to the obvious import of the expression, ver. 28, "We receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved."

28. *Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: 29. For our God is a consuming fire.*

Here, by the connective word "Wherefore," the solemnizing and animating views presented in ver. 25-27 are brought to bear, for practical uses, on the Christian Hebrews.

The "kingdom which cannot be moved" is what is called in the Gospels, "the kingdom of God," and,

“the kingdom of heaven.” It is the spiritual constitution established by Christ as the “Prince and Saviour.” Extending to heaven, it also takes cognizance of earth. It has laws, immunities, and a regular systematic arrangement; and is therefore called a “kingdom.” It survives amidst falling thrones and dissolving dynasties, “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,” and, in its essential character, it shall last throughout eternity; it is therefore represented as “a kingdom *which cannot be moved.*”

This kingdom believers are here described as “receiving.” “Fear not,” said Jesus, “little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom,” (Luke xii. 32). True Christians submit to the laws of that Economy; they are invested with its privileges; they are even now “kings and priests unto God;” and hereafter they “shall reign forever and ever.”

The fact that believers “receive the kingdom” is here suggested as a motive to Christian duty. And surely, if they possess such a high distinction, they ought to act accordingly—and if God has done such great things for them, they are bound to serve Him faithfully.

For doing so they are instructed to “have grace.” In order to the diligent, reverential, and acceptable service of their glorious King, they need his pardoning, sanctifying, sustaining, and refreshing grace. Divine grace is requisite, alike for excitement, encouragement, and acceptance, in “the work of the Lord.” Without such grace we can do nothing that is pure, and pious, and well-pleasing in the sight of Heaven; but, strong in its celestial succours, even “worm Jacob can thresh the mountains.” Such grace, then, must be attained—such grace must also be adhered to and preserved.

In possession of this precious gift, Christians are here required to “serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.” The word rendered “let us serve” (*λατρεύωμεν*) means *let us worship*. It is unnecessary, however, and would be unsuitable, to restrict the reference, in the present case, to formal acts of devotion. The general course and tenor of man’s life should involve constant homage to the King of kings—should be, as it were, a hymn of adoring praise, ascending to the Majesty of heaven.—“Acceptably” denotes a pre-eminently important characteristic, and a pre-eminently precious result, of the service which the believer ought to render to his God. In acceptable service, the act is in itself sincere and pious, and it is also sprinkled with the atoning blood of Christ and perfumed with the “incense” of his interceding prayers.—“Reverence and godly fear” are represented as an appropriate state of mind even for believers in the service of their reconciled God. In earthly families, filial reverence is quite compatible with filial confidence and love—and so in the family of Heaven. Angels “veil their faces” in the presence of the throne, and so should God’s children on the earth. They must regard their Father with warm affection—they must trust in Him with unswerving confidence—but they must also treat Him with adoring reverence. In order to this, they must direct their minds, in believing contemplation, to the purity and majesty of Jehovah, on the one hand, and to their own weakness and sinfulness, on the other.

The concluding words, “For our God is a consuming fire,” are probably meant to enforce especially the “reverence and godly fear” required in the expressions immediately preceding; but the solemn consideration

thus expressed is fitted to serve as an argument and motive for the complete course of conduct prescribed in ver. 28. Jehovah is the God of believers—*they* worship *Him*, and *He* manifests himself in mercy to *them*. But Christians are here admonished of a truth which had been addressed to Israel—"The Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God," (Exod. xx. 5). And well may the essential purity of the Divine Being, and his avenging justice towards the workers of iniquity, constitute, even in the minds of his believing people, motives to "serve Him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear."

CHAPTER XIII.

1. *Let brotherly love continue.*

The rational and moral inhabitants of the world constitute, as it were, one great family. They have the same Creator and Preserver, the same bodily and mental constitution, and the same present home and future destiny. On these facts depend the principle and obligation of Benevolence.

Men are gathered together in particular civil and political communities. In a commonwealth, its members are amenable to the same laws, protected by the same constitution, and knit, by birth and habit and experience, to the same soil. On these facts depend the principle and obligation of Patriotism.

There is also the smaller circle of the family. The members of this are sprung from the same stock, inhabit

the same house, are interested in the same concerns, and are knit together by a thousand tender ties. On these facts depend the principle and obligation of Domestic Affection.

But there is another family, more spiritual and more sacred—the family of believers. These are children of the same Father, God—brethren of the same Saviour, Christ—engaged in the same work, the service of Jehovah—participating in the same privileges, those of Christian discipleship—and destined to the same inheritance, the heavenly home. Hence the prescription of the text—“Let brotherly love continue.”

That the principle here specified is a spiritual one is absolutely certain. For (1.) In 1 John ii. 10, iii. 14, 18-19, iv. 7, brotherly-love is represented as a satisfactory sign of conversion and a sure token of spiritual safety; (2.) St. Paul, Col. i. 4; 2 Thess. i. 3, associates brotherly-love with Christian faith in such a way as to indicate that the former, like the latter, is a characteristic feature of personal religion; (3.) The same apostle says, 1 Thess. iv. 9, “Ye yourselves are *taught of God* to love one another;” and (4.) St. Peter, 1 Epist. i. 22, says:—“Ye have purified your souls, in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren.” Brotherly-love, then, is love subsisting among true Christians and rising out of their common relation to God, Christ, duty, and salvation. It is love springing from a spiritual source and corresponding to a spiritual relation.

In the exhortation “Let brotherly love continue,” it seems to be suggested that the sacred writer believed this high and heaven-born principle to have, in the case of the Christian Hebrews, already begun its bland and

blessed course. But even believers are liable to feel the evil influence of certain temptations to renounce this tender and noble principle. Remaining selfishness, difference of opinion among Christians on common or religious subjects, and the pride and party-spirit which controversy is fitted to occasion, are some of such temptations. These this kind and authoritative teacher would have his Hebrew brethren to avoid and overbear; he would also have them to cultivate such graces, and to contemplate such facts, as were fitted to foster the sacred flame; and so he would have "brotherly love to continue."

A father is wont to say to his children, 'Live in love,' and, should he send them on a common errand, "See that ye fall not out by the way." Dutiful children will regard the injunction as sacred; and the violation of it will be an act, not only of unbrotherly feeling, but of filial ingratitude and disobedience. A like command, oft repeated, has the great Father of believers given his children. O how ungrateful and disobedient, as well as unbrotherly, to break it!

A father is wont to say to his eldest child, 'Thou art the oldest of my children; set an example of gentleness and kindness to the rest.' The Elder-brother of believers is their great Exemplar. True, tender, faithful, practical, is his love to all his blood-bought and believing followers; and thus did He address his disciples:—"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another," (John xiii. 34).

What reproach and discomfort are brought on earthly families by coldheartedness and quarrels among their members! Such discomfort may befall the children of

God, and such reproach may be brought on the cause of Christ, by the want of brotherly-love. Of Christians it was said in an earlier age, 'See how they love one another.' Alas that in our own days Christ should not be more highly honoured than He is by a pervading and prominent exercise of brotherly love among his true-hearted followers and friends!

To renounce, or fall back in, any Christian virtue is ignoble, sinful, dangerous. Not least so, assuredly, would be the loss or suppression of brotherly-love. Good yesterday, it is good to-day, and good for ever. Important now, important must it ever be. Well, then, might the sacred writer say, "Let brotherly love continue."

2. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Kindness to strangers is urgently inculcated in the law of Moses. The following are examples:—Exod. xxiii. 9; Deut. x. 18, 19. What the Hebrews had been taught as Israelites, they are now taught as Christians.

Some people speak as if, in these modern times, the duty prescribed in the text were of little or no obligation. It is alleged that in the apostolic times strangers were very generally persons exiled from their homes and from their father-land for the Christian cause—that now, at least among ourselves, there is ample provision in public inns for the comfortable accommodation of strangers—and that one is very likely to be imposed on if he pay much attention to persons coming from other places of the world. No doubt, caution is needed in dealing with strangers, as in dealing with the poor. But as the obligation to be kind to the latter, so

the obligation to be kind to the former, still remains. Even where modes and customs specified in apostolic precepts have passed away, the spirit of those precepts may and should be still observed. In respect of the principle, even the injunctions, "Ye ought to wash one another's feet," "Salute one another with a holy kiss," are not obsolete. Moreover, strangers "persecuted for righteousness' sake" are still liable to come to us, in quest of sympathy and succour. There are men who, even as exiled patriots, are entitled to our sympathy and active kindness. The blandness of Christianity requires attention to be paid even to such as only come to visit our scenery and to study our manners. Positive assistance to strangers, where it is needed on *their* part and possible on *ours*, is required by the spirit, if not by the letter, of the present precept; the import of which is this:—"Forget not the love of strangers" (τῆς φιλοξενίας μὴ ἐπιλανθάνοσθε). But it admits of being obeyed by sympathetic and kindly feeling, even where pecuniary assistance or active succour is either unnecessary or impracticable.

There are more especially two other passages of the New Testament in which kindness to strangers is prescribed. Christ, from the judgment-throne, will say:—"I was a stranger, and ye took me in . . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me;" and again, "I was a stranger, and ye took me not in . . . Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me," (Matt. xxv. 35, 40, 43, 45). And, in writing to "the well-beloved Gaius," St. John thus addresses him, 3 Epist. 5-8:—"Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren and to strangers; which

have borne witness of thy charity before the Church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well; because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth."

Even in later ages of the Church, there have been fine exemplifications, personal and public, of kindness to Christian strangers. Some of the most remarkable of these belong to the age of the Reformation. The heart warms towards Frankfort and Geneva, in the memory of the hospitable shelter which those venerable cities gave, at that eventful epoch, to so many of our English and Scottish exiles. And not a few evangelical Protestants on the Continent of Europe now delight to extend their humble hospitality to British Christians whom an interest in "the common faith," or even a less sacred motive, may have carried to their shores.

The enforcement "for thereby some have entertained angels unawares," manifestly refers to certain visits paid to Abraham and others by angels under the guise of men. It is not necessary to suppose that the sacred writer considered it likely that, in the same form, angels would visit the Christians whom he here addresses. But (1.) The fact specified indicates what esteem Jehovah has for hospitable kindness to strangers—just as the promise attached to the precept, "Honour thy father and mother," and quoted by St. Paul as an enforcement of that precept, shows—although, in so far as its express terms are concerned, peculiar, in a great measure, to the Jewish age—how much stress the great Legislator lays on the duty thus enforced; and (2.) A parallel experience to that of Abraham and other

ancients is likely to be realized by such as faithfully comply with the precept of the text—inasmuch as persecuted saints are brethren of the angels, and they, and other followers of the Lamb who may come as strangers to the midst of us, resemble, in character and feeling, these celestial ministers of God.

3. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

Prisoners, from whatever cause imprisoned, appeal, by their mournful condition, to the compassion of the Christian heart; and if all are not required to be Howards, all are required to “remember them that are in bonds.” Such as are imprisoned for conscience and for Christ, however, have special claims on the friendly interest of “the household of faith.” That this class of prisoners is specially referred to in the present text, is indicated by the relation in which that text stands to the precept, ver. 1, “Let brotherly love continue.”

Once, and probably oftener, St. Paul himself was “a prisoner of Jesus Christ.” “The Holy Ghost witnessed in every city, that bonds and afflictions awaited him;” and it was when a prisoner at Rome—that he wrote certain of his apostolic letters. What *he* experienced, St. Peter and many other early followers of the Lamb were also called to suffer. Since the primitive age of the Christian Church, imprisonment has been a frequent form of suffering on the part of its more zealous and devoted members. Even in England, what a host of worthies have suffered imprisonment for conscience and for Christ! In Scotland, the dungeons of Dunottar and the Bass were the homes—if to these wretched habita-

tions the sweet and sacred name of *home* may be applied—of some of her noblest and her best. In some other places of the world—the seats and strongholds of Paganism, Mahometanism, or Popery—thousands *have* been, and probably hundreds *now are*, “prisoners of Jesus Christ.”

Such afflicted, yet honoured, servants of the Lord the Christian Hebrews are commanded to “remember.” There are, more especially, three ways in which this precept is to be obeyed. The first is compassion:—“Ye had compassion of me,” it is said, chapt. x. 34, “Ye had compassion of me in my bonds.” The second is, personal visitation or active assistance:—“I was hungry,” Christ will say from the “great white throne” of judgment, “I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. . . . Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me,” (Matt. xxv. 35, 36, 40). The third way is, prayer—earnest and believing prayer to Him who “looseth the prisoners,” (Psalm cxlvi. 7), and can repeat the scene in which, “at midnight,” in the prison of Philippi, “Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises to God, and the prisoners heard them,” (Acts xvi. 25):—“Peter was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him,” (Acts xii. 5.)

The phrase “as bound with them”—that is, *as being yourselves bound along with the prisoners*—refers to the conjunction of believers in one great mystical body, to their common interest in the same righteous and hon-

ourable cause, and to the sympathy which sweetly binds their souls together.

The expression rendered "them that suffer adversity" (*τῶν κακουχομένων*) denotes those, specifically, who were injuriously treated. To suppose, with Calvin, that, "as being yourselves also in the body," denotes the fellow-membership of the Church—or with Beza, that *in adversity* here falls to be supplied—would be forced, unnatural, and unnecessary. "In the body" manifestly denotes flesh and blood, and means, as in 2 Cor. v. 6, *embodied—in a state of embodiment*. So long as Christians linger here, they are, by connection with the body, kept in sensitive contact with a world of suffering and death, and subject to sickness, pain, bereavement, and other 'ills that flesh is heir to.' And this constitutes an appropriate reason for "remembering them that suffer adversity." There is here an appeal to the law of sympathy. But other facts and principles, specified in parallel passages scattered in thick profusion throughout the word of God, may well conspire with the consideration here presented, to prompt and dispose the followers of the generous and tender-hearted Saviour to compassionate, and also to succour and relieve, the sick, the sad, the destitute, the dying.

4. *Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*

It is very common to regard the former part of this verse as a command—*Let marriage be*, being supposed to be meant, instead of, "*Marriage is.*" In the original, the substantive verb is not introduced at all; so that there is a choice between the indicative and the imperative. But the context—sometimes represented as in

favour of the latter—is decidedly in favour of the former. The proposition “But whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” requires that part of the verse which stands in antithetical relation to it to be considered as also a proposition. The three preceding verses, indeed, and also that which follows this fourth verse, are in the hortatory or preceptive form. But it is quite usual for St. Paul, in the midst of a series of commands, to throw in practical propositions; and it is obvious that the statement, “Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge”—which is really of the nature of a prohibitory precept—might be very naturally and appropriately preceded by an acknowledgement that marriage is a legitimate and honourable thing. The fact that in the original the word rendered “undefiled” follows the word rendered “bed” is in favour of regarding *the undefiled bed* as a second nominative to “is honourable in all,” and as thus explanatory of the nominative *marriage*.

In the days of Christ and the apostles, there lived in Palestine, besides the sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees, another, called the Essenes; who held that marriage degraded the dignity of man and interfered with that contemplative life in which, on the margin of the Dead Sea and in other desolate and secluded scenes, they delighted to indulge. In the very first ages of the Christian Church, there were many, professing to be followers of Christ, who cherished, and carried into application, certain ascetic notions, one of which was the unsuitableness and unseemliness, in certain cases, of the married state. And in the middle ages arose an anti-Christian apostacy, still lording it, in religious matters, over a large part of Christendom, which denies the right

of marriage to the *priesthood*, as it calls its ministers. It was, probably, in the knowledge of what was already held by the Essenes, and in the anticipation of what has since been held by others, respecting matrimony, that the sentiment is here propounded, "Marriage is honourable in all."

Of course, it is not meant that it is absolutely incumbent on every one of marriageable age to enter into wedlock. St. Paul himself seems never to have been married; and he affirms that, considering the circumstances of pressure and persecution to which the primitive Christians were exposed, it was "good that others should continue even as he," (1 Cor. vii. 7, 8). According to the analogy thus suggested, and in consideration of the great latitude which Scripture leaves in reference to marriage, it may be lawful—if, indeed, it be not sometimes peculiarly suitable and prudent—that an individual of marriageable age should continue free from wedlock.

Nor is it here affirmed that all marriages are satisfactory or safe. A marriage, if such it may be called, within the degrees of relationship interdicted by the laws of nature and Leviticus—a marriage between a Christian and an infidel—a marriage between a Protestant and a Papist—a marriage between destitution in the bride and destitution in the bridegroom, ominous of rags and wretchedness on the part of their common offspring—are all unsafe and unsatisfactory states of things. And even where, at the time of union, no such perilous and repulsive conditions were involved, many a husband, and many a wife, has lived to look back, with fond and sad regret, on the sunny and unblighted days of unwedded youth.

But still, it is here affirmed that "marriage," in itself, "is honourable," and "honourable in all."

It "is honourable." It was instituted by God himself. It was at the very beginning of the world that He appointed it as a suitable ordinance for man. As Malachi tells us, Jehovah sought, by means of it, to secure "a godly seed," (Mal. ii. 15). It is admirably adapted to promote the comfort and harmony of domestic life. And it tends to shut out certain formidable social evils.

It "is honourable *in all*." In the original, no substantive is supplied to the word rendered "all." Hence some suppose that things, not persons, are meant. *In all classes of people* is certainly a more natural interpretation to put upon the phrase than *In all respects*. But even supposing the latter to be the right one, it does not follow that ministers of religion may not marry. If in the Bible no interdict be put on the marriage of Christian ministers, it is surely not for man to impose any such absolute prohibition of what is there left free. Moreover, St. Paul says, 1 Cor. ix. 5:—"Have we not power to carry about a sister"—that is, a Christian woman—as "a wife, as well as other apostles, and as brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" And in 1 Tim. iii. 2, 4, he says, "A bishop"—that is, a religious overseer—"must be the husband of one wife . . . one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;" adding, "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?"

Having thus sanctioned and commended marriage, the sacred writer warns against certain violations of the laws of chastity:—"whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

The difference between the two vices, or rather, between the two forms of the same vice, here specified, is manifest. In the one there is no violation of a marriage-covenant. In the other, the sacred matrimonial plight is broken.

In both forms, the sensual indulgence here spoken of is peremptorily and emphatically denounced, and that in many passages, both in the Old Testament and the New. Throughout civilized society, both are acknowledged, even by such as make no profession of personal piety, to be base and culpable. How inconsistent they are with the calling and character of a Christian, St. Paul forcibly points out in several of his letters, more especially in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. O, then, "let no man deceive us with vain words—for because of these things, cometh the wrath of God on the children of disobedience," (Eph. v. 6). And ye, the ransomed and regenerate ones of God, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's," (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20).

5. Let your *conversation* be *without covetousness*; and be *content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* 6. *So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*

The original word here rendered "without covetousness" (*ἀφιλάργυρος*) denotes freedom from the intense and absorbing love of money, whether for its own sake—as in the case of the miser—or for the sake of what

it can procure—as in the case of many votaries of earth.

It is observable that not here only, but also in Eph. v. 5 and Col. iii. 5, “covetousness” is closely associated with certain of the grossest and vilest vices—as if to indicate that in moral character it is essentially the same. In two of these texts, it is represented as “idolatry;” and idolatry is habitually represented in Scripture as a pre-eminently heinous sin. So also Christ himself says, Matt. vi. 24, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon,” that is, riches. A similar distinction is expressed in these words, 1 Tim. vi. 17:—“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God.” And in Job xxxi. 24-28, the patriarch thus expresses his sense of the idolatrous character of the intense and absorbing love of money:—“If I have made gold my hope, or said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; if I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much; if I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness, and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand: this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge, for I should have denied the God that is above.” And as this sin is represented as pre-eminently vile, and as an outrage on the claims of the only true God, so it is also described as fraught with most pernicious consequences. “They,” says St. Paul, 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10, “They that will be,” that is, that are determined to be, “rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted

after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." And how truly and strikingly is this the case! Injustice and breach of trust—the practice of "grinding the faces of the poor"—the violation, by worldly business, of the sacred Sabbath rest—the wild speculation which so frequently brings ruin on particular families, and occasionally sweeps like a desolating torrent over the whole field of commercial enterprise—and, not to multiply examples, murder itself—are some of the many sins to which the love of money leads.

While, in the present text, the sacred writer guards against the love of money, he also prescribes the positive virtue of contentment:—"be content with such things as ye have."

This may seem a precept only appropriate to the poor. But discontent may exist, and often does, in as great strength and violence in persons liberally supplied with the comforts and conveniences of life, as in men who tread its humbler walks and share but scantily in its worldly goods. A Dives may murmur at his lot when a Lazarus is content.

The reasons for contentment are manifold and varied. Our lot is determined by the sovereign Providence. He who has fixed and appointed it is infinitely wise and righteous. What are we—mean, sinful, and unworthy—that we should murmur at what He sends us, or think, or speak, or act as if we deserved something better at his hand? We are "less than the least of all God's benefits;" and "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." Even in an earthly lot peculiarly depressed, there are still some elements of good. The hope of a change for

time may well combine with the offer of glory in eternity to rebuke complaint and to soothe the perturbations of the soul. And O how does discontentment interfere with our duty both to God and man! To take a single example, how can a discontented spirit suitably celebrate Jehovah's praise? And as for God's adopted children—what special reasons have *they* to be content! Their lot is determined by a reconciled Father; and that in the exercise of *his* transcendent love, and for the promotion of *their* highest weal. In *their* case, the wants of earth will soon be exchanged for the exuberant affluence of heaven. And even now, as the sacred writer goes on to specify, they have an interest in the special care and fellowship of God:—"He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

"He" has been supposed to be, in the present case, emphatic—representative of God as the great isolated One. There may, however, be a reference to "God" in ver. 4 as an antecedent. But assuredly, the fact that it is the infinitely wise, omnipotent, and all-sufficient One that gives the promise specified renders that promise, and the privilege of which it makes mention, pre-eminently glorious.

In the original, the Greek corresponding to "nor forsake thee" has three negatives. The whole promise might be rendered—"I will never leave thee, no, never, never, forsake thee." In these striking and emphatic terms, God pledges himself to be the Guardian and the Guide of all, and each, of his believing and obedient people. Money may leave them—it is wont to "take to itself wings and fly away." Friends may leave them—for "man dieth and wasteth away, yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" Health may leave

them—for “all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness of man as the flower of the field.” Life may leave them—for “what man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?” But He who has all the resources of the universe under his control, and is himself infinitely grander and better than the whole aggregate and variety of his rich and magnificent creation, says—“I will never leave, no, never, never forsake thee.”

But where does Jehovah say so? He said to Joshua, “As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee,” (Josh. i. 5). He said to his Church—“Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness,” (Isa. xli. 10). In these cases—meant for the encouragement of believers to the end of time—Jehovah uses the very phraseology, or language closely resembling that, of the present text. And in many of the other promises of Scripture—some of them addressed to particular individuals, such as that addressed to Abraham, “Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward,” (Gen. xv. 1)—and some of them applied to God’s believing and obedient people in general, such as many of those contained in the Book of Psalms—the import of the assurance here specified is expressed—“I will never leave, nor forsake thee.”

This promise is applied as an enforcement of the duties specified in ver. 5, by the conjunction “for,” and as an enforcement of what is prescribed in ver. 6—where a quotation is made from Psalm cxviii. 6—by the connective phrase “so that.” And O, if God be the immutable and immortal Friend, and Champion, and

Portion of believers, surely, covetousness would ill become them—surely, they should be “content with such things as they have”—surely, they may, and should, be bold and confident, even in the midst of dangers and in the face of foes.

7. *Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.*

It is obvious that ministers are here described. The terms of the first clause, as rendered in the English translation, may seem to imply that the ministers meant were still alive. But there is decisive reason for believing that it is of deceased ministers that the sacred writer speaks. (1.) The second part of the description is in the past, not the present:—“who *have spoken* unto you the word of God.” (2.) The “conversation,” or course of life, is represented as having come to its “end” (ἐκβασιῶν). (3.) The living ministers of the Christian Hebrews, and the obligation of the latter to the former, are set forth in ver. 17. (4.) The representation of Christ’s unchangeableness in ver. 8, indicates a reference in ver. 7—with which that verse is obviously connected—to some such idea as the decease of the persons there specified. Nor is the phrase rendered “which have the rule over you” inconsistent with this view of the reference. In the original, it is the participle of the verb that is used (ἡγουμένων). That participle may be associated as well with the past as with the present, and, indeed, may be quite accurately rendered, as in the margin, *guides*.

In speaking of these deceased guides, the sacred writer both gives a description of them, and prescribes

to the Christian Hebrews a certain corresponding course of procedure.

I. He describes these departed ministers:—"your guides, who have spoken unto you the word of God."

1. They had been the guides of the Hebrew Christians.

Thus early in the history of Christianity, had men been commissioned and qualified to superintend the spiritual interests of the professed followers of Christ. These men were appointed to guide—by their doctrine, their example, and the other appliances which ministers were instructed to bring to bear on the understanding, the conscience, and the heart—the people committed to their care; and this, all of them who were faithful to their solemn and momentous charge actually did. Like shepherds, they went before their flocks, and sought to lead them to "the green pastures and the still waters." Or, to vary the idea of a guide—like the skilful and venturesome men who, in the east, conduct the traveller over the arid and far-extending desert-sands, or, among the Alpine mountains, lead him along the narrow and meandering paths or across the slippery seas of ice, they went before the people of their charge, and sought to guide them safely amidst the difficulties and the dangers of their earthly course. Such is the calling of the minister of Christ—such, where he is faithful, is also, in some degree, his high and honourable work.

2. These deceased ministers had "spoken" to the Christian Hebrews "the word of God."

Certain of them, probably, were apostles, and thus, plenary inspired of God. Others of them may have lacked the gift of apostolic inspiration; but still, "the word of God" was what they were called, and what

they undertook, to teach. Such, too, must be the aim and attainment of modern ministers. They may use their understandings, to vindicate and explain the heavenly message. They may draw on the resources of learning, to remove difficulties from Scripture, and to throw light on its sacred pages. They may even exercise their imaginations—not, indeed, to commingle human fancies with Heaven's immutable and eternal truth, O no!—but to attract the mind towards practical instruction, and to help it in the formation of vivid and impressive views. Still, all must be tributary to “the word of God;” and that word itself is what is wont to arrest the conscience, what must constitute the doctrine which saving faith appropriates, and what is chiefly found to sanctify and cheer the believer's soul.

II. The sacred writer prescribes to the Christian Hebrews a certain course of procedure in reference to their faithful departed ministers.

1. They were to “remember” them.

Among Roman Catholics it has been common to honour men regarded as saints, by gathering around their graves, committing their names to the sacred calendar, and laying up supposed relics of their bodies or their dress. In this way, much silly and dangerous superstition has been introduced and encouraged in the world. Of course, it is far otherwise that the Hebrews are here required to “remember” their sainted ministers deceased. They were to look back, with the eye of memory, on those whom with the eye of flesh they looked upon no more; and still, with memory's ear, to listen to the words of celestial truth which, with their living voices, those servants of the Lord had taught. Their form and look—but most of all, their character and

doctrine—were still to be remembered, and oft to be reflected on. Thus should the surviving Christians be, in some degree, prepared to comply with the other prescriptions of the verse; and thus should they be realizing, to some extent, the very end for which the deceased had acted as their “guides” and “spoken to them the word of God.”

2. They were to “follow the faith” of these departed saints.

These good men had believed. What prompted them to “speak the word?” Faith. What prompted them to “guide” the people? Faith. What made them strong to labour? Faith. What made them calm and courageous in the midst of danger? Faith. What made them willing to suffer and die in the cause in which they were embarked? Faith. What gave them peace and triumph on the verge of life? Faith. What gave them victory over death and bore them safely to eternity? Faith.

Like faith the Hebrews are required to cherish. They, too, had sins to be forgiven; and therefore they needed faith. They, too, had souls to be sanctified; and therefore they needed faith. They, too, had arduous duties to discharge; and therefore they needed faith. They, too, had trials to endure; and therefore they needed faith. They, too, had death to meet and eternity to enter; and therefore they needed faith. That “word of God” which their ministers had “spoken” *they* had heard; and, as Divinely true, it claimed to be believed—it urgently demanded faith. And that such faith might hold possession of their minds, they were to contemplate and to imitate that of their departed ministers.

3. They were to "consider the end of" these good men's "conversation."

That "conversation," or course of life, in so far as it was pure, and honourable, and earnest, they were bound, of course, to think upon and copy. But it is, more especially, "the end," or termination, of that course which they are here commanded to "consider." These men of God had died. The Christian Hebrews were to consider that. The death of these men had been safe, and probably peaceful and triumphant too; though involving, perhaps, in certain cases, bloody martyrdom. That also was to be considered by survivors. By the serious consideration of such an end, they might be admonished, and they might also be encouraged and consoled. Warned of the hastening termination of their lives, they might also be stimulated so to live as to be ready, when the summons should arrive, to die. Imitating in the days of their own terrestrial course the faith and zeal of the departed, they might, when its end should come, depart, as *they* had done, in safety and in peace.

The word rendered "considering" (*ἀναθεωροῦντες*) means, literally, *looking up*; and it has been supposed to have a reference to the painter's attitude in copying from a model. That this idea was really in the writer's mind it would be rash and unreasonable to affirm. But imitation is, in this verse, as in many other texts, expressly specified; and even as in a gallery of art hung round with grand and graceful specimens of the taste and skill of departed genius, bright-eyed youth, and even artists of long and large experience, may be seen "looking up" to the beautiful models on the walls, that they may, if possible, transfer to their own canvas, the hues, and lineaments, and expressions, of what they so

attentively survey, so must it be with Christians in the picture-gallery of Time.

8. *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.*

“Jesus Christ” is in the nominative, and requires the substantive verb to be supplied.

It is obviously the Mediatorial Christ who is here represented as unchangeably the same. As God, He is, of course, in common with the Father, One “who was and is and is to come,” “having no variableness nor shadow of turning.” And as God-man, Prophet, Priest, and King, He is permanent in his character and fixed in his procedure. What He was, personally and relatively, in the days of our Christian fathers, He is now, and will continue, from generation to generation, and from age to age, to be.

The proposition of this verse stands in intimate relation to ver. 7. That relation may be considered as two-fold. (1.) Ministers died, and the social relations of Christians changed; but Jesus, “the High-priest of their profession,” had “an unchangeable priesthood” and “continued ever.” (2.) The unchangeableness of Christ implied that what He was to the pious ministers referred to He was ready to be to their surviving people—and that the same faith which the deceased believers cherished in life and in death, it was right and reasonable that their survivors should cherish too. The proposition of this 8th verse also serves as a natural introduction to ver. 9, and is even fitted to enforce the precept it contains.

9. *Be not carried about with divers and strange doc-*

trines: for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

“Diverse” denotes variety. “Strange” denotes deviation from the standard of Divine truth. “Carried about” seems to have a reference to the inconstancy and agitation of a vessel under the influence of contending currents, or of irregular and rapidly shifting winds.

The reference to “meats” indicates that one particular class of “doctrines” was in the sacred writer’s eye—namely, those doctrines relative to distinctions among kinds of food which are inveighed against in the Epistles to the Romans and Colossians. The stress laid by many of the Jewish converts on these distinctions was not only superstitious, but also, as interfering with Christ’s peculiar and exclusive place in the salvation of the sinner, exceedingly dangerous. But still, the precept of the text is general; and, even where the distinctions now referred to are not recognized, it may need to be urged, as, assuredly, it deserves to be obeyed. In this very age, speculative youths, enthusiastic women, and even some from whose education and intelligence better things might be expected, are in danger of being “carried about with divers and strange doctrines.” In religion, as in other departments of inquiry, there is a certain independence of thought which is both lawful and becoming. But alas, alas, that so many, in their speculations and their opinions about the momentous matters of religion, should make themselves independent of the paramount authority and the distinct declarations of God’s own standard-book!

In the latter part of the verse, the precept contained in the former part of it is enforced.

To "have the heart established with grace" requires (1.) That the individual be the subject of that Divine grace which pardons, sanctifies, succours, saves, the human soul; and (2.) That, in the experience of this grace—which, both as an object of contemplation and as a source of strength, is fitted to promote the end—the soul should be "rooted, grounded," and confirmed, in sound religious principle and feeling.

The doctrine that distinctions of meat entered into the ground of human justification was not true even under the Economy of Moses. And now, under the Economy of Christ, the very doctrine that there was a moral difference among articles of fare had passed away. Tenaciously to hold these doctrines, then, or, by recognizing them, to have the mind in a state of settled confidence and confirmation, was an unwholesome and *unprofitable* state of things.

In a well-known Essay, a powerful writer, John Foster, illustrates and enforces 'Decision of Character.' I have heard a person of distinction say, that whatever he *was* professionally he owed to the perusal of that Essay. And yet, there is some truth in the remark of an eminent friend of Foster's, Robert Hall, that the author of the Essay has not sufficiently distinguished between decision in good and decision in evil, and that, while the former is pre-eminently desirable, the latter is pre-eminently dangerous, (Hall's *Works*, vol. ii.) Here, and throughout the Epistles of the New Testament, the distinction is broadly and clearly drawn.

The kind of establishment recommended in the present text, is described as "good." And such, assuredly, it is. For "the heart" to "be established with grace, not with meats," is a dignified and honourable state of

mind. It produces, and in some degree involves, composure of feeling, tranquillity of soul, a calm and peaceable assurance, free from the painful restlessness of anxiety and fear. It is a practical tribute, suitable and seemly, to the force of evidence and the authority of God. And finally, it gives the man a firm and solid stand-point from which to act, with vigour and effect, in the noblest and best of causes.

10. *We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.*

This verse, taken in connection with that which immediately precedes it, intimates, or, at least, suggests, (1.) That the ceremonial system, in which the distinction of meats occupied so prominent a place, was now superseded and set aside; (2.) That notwithstanding, there was, under the Christian Economy, a certain food of which Christians might partake; (3.) That this food, like that portion of the ancient sacrifices of which the priests were entitled to partake, was intimately related to an altar.

I. The sacred writer here specifies an altar:—"We have an altar."

In this statement and the remainder of the sentence, Roman Catholics profess to find the Mass. In answer to this interpretation, it is, perhaps, sufficient to suggest, (1.) That, in this very Epistle, Christ is represented as only once, and that 1800 years ago and more, offered up in propitiatory sacrifice; and (2.) That the doctrine of the Romish Mass that Christ's real and whole humanity is truly presented, in the sacramental elements, wherever the prescribed service is duly performed, belies the evidence of the senses, and, as sup-

posing that Christ's one human nature may yet be multiplied into many humanities, each of them complete, is self-contradictory, monstrous, and absurd.

Some, however, who renounce the doctrine of the Mass, suppose that by the "altar," in the present text, the communion-table is meant. This view, if not, like the other, absolutely foolish, is, at least, quite unsatisfactory. It is one principal design of this Epistle to exhibit the typical character of the old Economy. The sacrifices of that Economy are represented as typical of Christ crucified. When, then, the altar is spoken of as realized in Christianity, something on which the crucified Christ was offered up must be intended. Indeed, in ver. 11, 12, the altar on which was presented the spiritual food of which Christians may partake, is expressly associated with the "sufferings" of Christ "without the gate."

The "altar," then, is, either the cross on which Messiah "bare men's sins in his own body," or, as many of the old evangelical theologians supposed, that Divine Nature with which Christ's sacrificed humanity was so intimately connected, and which gave to his offering its pre-eminent dignity and value, in like manner as in the Levitical Economy "the altar sanctified the gift."

II. A certain meat is here referred to as connected with this Christian altar:—"We have an altar, whereof they have no right *to eat* which serve the tabernacle."

The meat which the priests of the ancient dispensation were permitted to take from the altar and appropriate to themselves was the sacrifice, or, at least, part of the sacrifice, itself. Even so, the sacrificed Christ is the believer's spiritual food. In a parallel text—where,

however, the reference is to the paschal lamb, which, besides being offered in sacrifice, was also eaten—it is said :—“ Even Christ our passover, is sacrificed for us : therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness ; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth,” (1 Cor. v. 7, 8). And in the 6th chapter of the Gospel of St. John, Christ himself represents his “ flesh and blood ” as suitable and necessary food for man, and shows how man is to appropriate them in that character. “ I am the bread of life,” says he ; “ My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed,” (ver. 35, 55). The use of this spiritual fare He enforces in the sayings :—“ Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, ye have no life in you : whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day,” (ver. 53, 54). And what He means by “ eating his flesh and drinking his blood ” He explains, not by propounding the doctrine of the Mass, but by thus prescribing faith :—“ He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst,” (ver. 35).

III. The sacred writer specifies a certain restriction, or qualification, in reference to the use of this food :—“ whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.”

It is not meant that it was impossible for Jewish priests to appropriate Christ as “ the bread of life,” or that they were interdicted from the privileges of Christianity. *They*, as well as others, were comprehended in the Gospel-call ; and in the Acts of the Apostles, it is said, that “ a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith,” (Acts vi. 7). But it was not by the same

tenure as that which entitled a priest to the food of the Levitical altar that he could be entitled to Christ as the food of the hungry and thirsty soul. It was not as a priest, but as a believer, that he could claim and actually use this sacred and glorious fare.

11. *For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burnt without the camp.* 12. *Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.*

Here the sacred writer both specifies a certain order of things existing under the Mosaic Economy, and points out a certain corresponding fact realized in the work of Christ.

I. He refers to what transpired under the dispensation of Moses, ver. 11.

“The camp,” of course, denotes the aggregate of temporary fabrics erected in the wilderness for the use of the Jewish people. It was understood that, after their settlement in Canaan, the city of Jerusalem corresponded to “the camp;” and as the bodies of certain sacrificed animals were, in the first instance, “burned without the camp,” so, afterwards, they were burned “without the gate.”

The bodies of all sin-offerings were commanded to be burned. The general law on the subject is contained in Leviticus vi. But in the present text it is said of the animals specified, not only that their “bodies were burned without the camp,” but also that “their blood was brought into the sanctuary by the high-priest for sin.” This indicates that it is specifically of the sin-offerings presented on the great day of expiation that

mention is here made. The law respecting both parts of the ceremonial specified is recorded in Leviticus xvi.

II. The sacred writer goes on to point out a corresponding state of things in the case of Christ, ver. 12.

The person spoken of is "Jesus;" and probably that name is here employed as being specially significant of the salvation which Christ effected and the sufferings which He endured.

1. It is affirmed that He "suffered without the gate."

Were it Christ's sufferings in general that are specified, we should have occasion to travel side by side with Him from his cradle to his cross. He was indeed, through life, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." But it is specifically to his sufferings "without the gate" that reference is here made; and these were realized in the tragic scenes of the Crucifixion. They consisted more especially of these three elements:— (1.) The intensely severe corporeal pain of that lingering and agonizing death; (2.) The calumnious reproaches and cruel scorn with which He was assailed, as He hung, naked and bleeding, on the tree of suffering and shame; (3.) That sense of Divine desertion, and that consciousness of subjection to the judicial curse of Heaven, which drew from Him the "exceeding great and bitter cry," "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" These sufferings Christ endured "without the gate"—outside the city-walls. The scene, the memorable scene, was Calvary. Whether the spot traditionally pointed out as that where Christ was crucified be really that where this awful mystery transpired, is sometimes doubted. But, at any rate, that it was "without the gate," and so coincided with the fact that

it was "without the camp" that the old sin-offerings of Israel had been "burned," is here expressly testified.

2. It is affirmed that Jesus "suffered without the gate" "*that he might sanctify the people with his own blood.*"

The ceremonial sense of the word "sanctify" is *consecrate*; and there are more especially three things to which Christ sought, by his sufferings, to consecrate the people of his charge—the favour, the service, and the fellowship of God. He realized the transcendent value and the urgent importance of all and each of these things; and so, He sought, and that at the cost of his life-blood, to secure, for a mighty multitude of guilty, alienated, and ruined men, acceptance and eternal peace with the offended Majesty of heaven—conformity to the Divine image and submission to the Divine law—and, finally, sweet and sublime communion here, and unbroken and everlasting fellowship hereafter, with the great Father-Spirit.

As the Eternal Sire is said to have "sent *his own* Son," so here the Mediatorial Son is represented as giving "*his own* blood," and elsewhere as "bearing men's sins in *his own* body," (1 Peter ii. 24.) This emphatic specification of "his own blood" serves, (1.) To contradistinguish the sacrifice of Christ from the sacrifices presented by the Levitical priesthood; (2.) To exhibit the transcendent love displayed by Christ in the sacrifice He rendered; and (3.) To show how that sacrifice is so great in value and so rich in results.

The relation of Christ's "own blood" to the sanctification of "the people," and the fact that He "suffered without the gate" *in order that* He "might sanctify" them with that sacred blood, are illustrated in many

preceding passages of this Epistle, and in a multitude of other texts of the New Testament. His sufferings and death constituted an atoning sacrifice, in virtue of which God could, legitimately and honourably, receive sinners into peace and favour with himself. Those sufferings and this death, both procured the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost, and constitute powerful motives and encouragements to a life of purity and new obedience. And finally, through Christ crucified Jews and Gentiles "have access by one Spirit unto the Father," and men "have boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus."

3. By the word "Wherefore" at the beginning of ver. 12, the fact that "the bodies of those beasts whose blood was brought into the sanctuary by the high-priest for sin were burned without the camp," is associated with the fact that "Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."

The connection lies—as is indicated in the previous representation of the law as having "a shadow of good things to come"—in the typical character of the sin-offerings of old, and the corresponding antitypical character of the sacrifice of Christ. The former shadowed forth the latter; and to suppose that the sin-offerings of the Jews, being typical, had yet no Messianic counterpart would be virtually to suppose—O mad and monstrous supposition!—that wild mockery existed in the providence of God. The types required an antitype, and an antitype they found in Christ. As the animals offered up, according to the laws of Moses, on the annual day of expiation suffered, so did Jesus. As the former were offerings for sin, so Jesus "was wounded

for men's transgressions," "He was bruised for their iniquities," He "bore their sins in his own body on the tree." As "the bodies of" the former "were burned without the camp," so He "suffered without the gate." And finally, it was in fulfilment of the typical import of the presentation, in a certain way, of those ancient sacrifices, that, in a certain way, the sin-offering of Christ was offered up.

13. *Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.*

It is stated by Arago, the French philosopher, that when he visited Glasgow, and went in quest of the house where James Watt carried on certain of his earlier experiments on the powers and applications of steam, he found the fabric levelled to the ground, but saw, on the spot, a nobler monument of that distinguished engineer—mighty machines constructing by earnest minds and busy hands—machines in which were embodied the very principles which, half-a-century before, flashed on the meditative mind of Watt, and the very results which, by his experiments and discoveries, he sought, (Arago's *Memoir of Watt*). There is a natural feeling which induces one to search out the homes and the haunts of distinguished men; and this feeling Christianity, though it regulates it, does not eradicate or overturn. Pious travellers have spent many a pleasant hour, and 'wandered many a weary foot,' in quest of scenes where Christian orators have discoursed their lofty eloquence, Christian poets have sung their stately songs, Christian historians have edited their instructive pages, and Christian martyrs have shed their precious blood. But there is, or at

least ought to be, a nobler monument than these local scenes to the greatly good, even the embodiment in moral machines — in the hearts and characters and lives of men — of the glorious principles which the departed champions of truth and righteousness maintained, and of the glorious ends which they sought by their efforts and their prayers to realize. Even so— if the simple illustration may be carried on without presumption in reference to our illustrious Lord—while earnest pilgrims travel far, by land and sea, to behold the spot where Jesus “suffered,” and archæologists seek to identify the “gate” through which the glorious Sufferer passed from “the Dolorous Way” to the scene of his bitter death, and geographers debate whether what is now called Calvary be precisely the place where Christ was crucified, his friends and followers are required to be themselves a noble memorial to his praise—an outstanding monument of the virtue of his cross, and the “riches of his grace”—by embodying in their own persons the principles which Christ maintained and the objects for which He died. This practical and precious lesson is prescribed and enforced in the present verse.

I. A certain duty is here prescribed:—“Let us go forth to Him (Jesus) without the camp, bearing his reproach.”

The general import of this exhortation obviously is—that the Christian Hebrews were to associate themselves with Christ as a reproached and persecuted One, and were to be willing and well-disposed to bear reproach and persecution for his sake.

Nor is this, in its essence, an obsolete and antiquated duty. True, Christ and Christianity are not exposed in

Britain to the same amount of reproach and persecution as they were liable to suffer at the outset of the Christian era, when Jews and Gentiles combined to assail them with calumnies and still more formidable weapons of attack. But the strict and faithful adherence to Christ still exposes a man to reproach—sometimes, even to ridicule and scorn. The very fact that such treatment is less fierce and violent than in the case of the primitive followers of the Lamb, makes it the more urgent that modern Christians should boldly brave and meekly bear it, and would make their failure to do so peculiarly sinful and unworthy. And even where the Christian is hid from the shafts of reproach and persecution, still, the spirit of the martyr must be his—he must be willing and prepared to bear, for Christ's sake, whatever may befall him in the noble and honourable cause in which he has embarked.

Although, in certain texts of Scripture, faith in Christ is exhibited under the idea of *coming to him*, yet it would obviously be rash and unwarranted to say that here the words, "Let us go forth unto him," means, Let us believe in Him. Nevertheless, if a man is to cast in his lot with Christ as a reproached and persecuted Saviour, he must receive and cling to Him by faith. It would be false to profess allegiance to "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" without believing on Him. And no one can be duly qualified without Christian faith to discharge the duties, and endure the trials, which a cordial, strict, and steady profession of Christianity involves.

To "go forth without the camp" has been supposed to denote the renunciation of the wicked society, and also of the ecclesiastical constitution, which prevailed in

the city of Jerusalem. The phrase seems rather meant to bring out the idea of attaching oneself to Christ in the character of a humbled, reproached, and martyred Lord. But notwithstanding, it is a truth, and a practical and solemn one, that, in attaching himself to Christ in these characters, a man must renounce dependence on formal ceremonies, part from evil associations, and break "fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."

"His reproach" in the last clause of the verse is certainly meant to express reproach incurred in the cause and for the sake of Christ. But there must be some reason for this being expressly called "*his* reproach." And in point of fact, the reproach which Christ endured and that which believers incur on his account are, as it were, identical. In the two cases, there is, both in the nature and in the ground of the reproach, an essential sameness. Moreover, the mutual sympathy between Christ and believers enhances the idea denoted by "*his* reproach." As believers sympathize with Christ in what *He* endured, so *He* sympathizes with *them* in the reproaches and sufferings *they* incur.

II. The duty here prescribed is enforced by the connective word, "therefore."

That word is retrospective; and in the previous context there are three considerations well fitted to urge the course of conduct here specified. (1.) "Jesus suffered"—suffered as a sacrifice for sin; how ungrateful, then, to refuse to "go forth to Him without the camp, bearing his reproach!" (2.) "Jesus suffered *without the gate*;" and "it is meet that the disciple be as his master, and the servant as his Lord." (3.) "Jesus suffered *without the gate that He might sanctify*

the people with his own blood ;" and how could this end be realized in his followers—how could they, by his atoning sacrifice, be consecrated ones—if they refused or neglected to do what the text prescribes? This duty is still further enforced in the succeeding verse.

14. *For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.*

In chapt. xii. 22, 28, "the city of the living God," "the heavenly Jerusalem," and "a kingdom which cannot be moved," seem all to denote the spiritual Economy of Christ. The city here represented as the object of the Christian's quest, however, appears to be specifically the future state of blessedness and glory. This view is favoured by these three considerations:—(1.) That in the statement, "*here* we have no continuing city," that other city is virtually represented as not being on the earth; (2.) That it is spoken of as a city "to come;" and (3.) That the Christian Hebrews are described, not as having come to it, nor as having received it, but as *seeking* it.

With the glorious "city"—the system of righteous government, noble immunities, high pursuits, splendid honours, and exstatic joys—which the Hebrew believers are said to "seek," is here contrasted the Jerusalem of earth. That great metropolis was about to be destroyed. In the course of a few more fleeting years, it was to be levelled with the dust. Before that decisive event should happen, many of the Christian Hebrews should themselves have passed away. And probably many of them were already exiles from their own Jerusalem. But they *sought* a heavenly home. They anticipated it in the exercise of hope; and, in the

use of appointed and appropriate means, they endeavoured to attain it.

Modern cities are destined, like old Jerusalem, to fall. The wealthiest, strongest, finest, noblest, of the towns and commonwealths of earth are but things of time. And men themselves are frailer and more fleeting still. How urgent and important to sit loose to earthly homes and all terrestrial things, and to aim at a loftier dwelling and a nobler prize! How poor is he who has but an earthly city for his home, and but an earthly treasure for his portion! How rich and happy he whose soul shall soon possess, and even now by Christian hope anticipates, the city that shall never pass away! And how reasonable and incumbent—as, by the word “For,” is here suggested—that the “citizens of” that “no mean city,” the heirs and expectants of that heavenly home, should be constrained, by gratitude for so vast a portion, anticipation of so bright a prize, and severance in heart as in condition from perishable cities and fleeting joys, to “go forth to Jesus without the camp bearing his reproach!”

15. *By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.*

Here, by the connective word “therefore,” the practice of rendering to God “the sacrifice of praise,” and of doing so by Christ, is appropriately enforced by a reference to the believer’s relation, as stated in ver. 14, to the vanishing cities of earth and the imperishable city of the heavens, and probably also to the sufferings and corresponding claims of Jesus, as set forth in ver. 12, 13.

The objects and grounds of praise to God are to be found in these three things:—(1.) Our personal experience of his loving-kindness and tender-mercy; (2.) “His wonderful works to the children of men;” and (3.) His own essential and transcendental excellence and glory.

In order to the suitable presentation of praise to God, these two things are requisite:—(1.) That the objects of celebration should be realized and contemplated—a preliminary suggested in these words of the Psalmist, “Men shall fear and shall declare the work of God, for they shall wisely consider of his doings,” (Psalm lxiv. 9); (2.) That corresponding feelings—such as, reverence, gratitude, complacency—should be “shed abroad upon the heart.”

There are various forms in which “the sacrifice of praise” is to be presented. St. Paul requires “prayer and supplication” to be associated with “thanksgiving,” (Philip. iv. 6); and assuredly, in approaching God by prayer, it is suitable and seemly to celebrate the glory of Him whom we address, and in asking good things for the future, it is reasonable and becoming to acknowledge his goodness in the present and the past. The same apostle prescribes psalmody as a proper form of praise, (Eph. v. 19; Col. iii. 16); and to sing unto the Lord is frequently urged, both by precept and example, in the Book of Psalms. The commendation of God to others, whether in formal discourse or in social converse, may seem no direct act of homage presented to God himself; but in like manner as “to do good and to communicate” are represented, in ver. 16, as “sacrifices,” so even the manifestation of the Divine grace and glory in conference with our fellow-creatures, if devoutly carried on with a view to the honour of God

himself, may be regarded as one particular form of "the sacrifice of praise."

This sacrifice is to be offered *continually*. It is not necessary, indeed, that every instant or every hour be occupied by us in formally or actually rendering praise to God, any more than in the exercise of prayer—in reference to which it is said in a similar text to the present, "Pray without ceasing." But praise, like prayer, must be habitual and persevering. It is a thing for all seasons and conditions of life. In youth and age—in health and sickness—in prosperity and adversity—in life and death—at morning, noon, and night—the sacrifice of praise is a tribute due to the majesty of God and seemly on the part of man. And on this, as on every part, of the duty of praise, what monitory exemplifications are there in the Book of Psalms! Thus, Psalm xxxiv. 1, "I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth;" Psalm cxlv. 1, 2, "I will extol Thee, my God, O King, and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless Thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever."

It is here still further required, that "the sacrifice of praise" be offered *by Christ*. God will no more accept the *praises* than He will accept the *prayers* of men except through Christ, the "one Mediator between God and man;" and it is reasonable and right that, in presenting to Jehovah "the sacrifice of praise," believers should not only be prompted by Christ's authority and guided by Christ's example, but also realize Christ's atonement and depend on Christ's righteousness.

In the explanatory expressions, "that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name," "the fruit of our lips" strictly corresponds to the Septuagint translation

of the phrase rendered in Hosea xiv. 2, "the calves of our lips," and "giving thanks" may be exchanged, as in the margin of the English Bible, for "confessing"—the strict import of the original word (*ὁμολογούντων*).

16. *But to do good and to communicate forget not : for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

The duties here prescribed are of a different class from those prescribed in ver. 15. The one relate more immediately to men—the others, to God. The one are duties of beneficence—the others, duties of devotion. And men—sometimes, even regenerated men—are apt to make the discharge of the latter a pretext and occasion for the neglect of the former. It is, probably, on the ground of such considerations that the 16th verse is associated with the 15th by the conjunction "but" instead of the simple connective "and." It seems as if the sacred writer virtually said, 'You must, indeed, by Christ habitually and stedfastly celebrate the praises of your God : but, in doing so, you must not omit to perform, with like regularity and perseverance, the distinct, but incumbent and important, work of promoting, by your contributions and your efforts, the welfare of the world.

How finely were the two classes of duties here set over against each other combined in the character and conduct of our illustrious Lord ! Jesus was wont to go up to the mountain-sides to pray ; and not merely in the milder and calmer scenes of his eventful life, but in "the dark and cloudy day" and in the wild and wintry storm, gave his God and Father thanks. And yet, He "went about," as St. Peter says, "doing good," (Acts x. 38).

To "do good" means *to be beneficent*; and the word *beneficence* means, the practice of *doing good*. The sphere of Christian beneficence is thus prescribed:—"As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith," (Gal. vi. 10). And as the range of its appropriate objects is very extensive, so it must take practical cognizance alike of the temporal and spiritual miseries, and must aim alike at the present and eternal welfare, of those towards whom it is directed.

"To communicate" is one form of "doing good"—or rather, it is one of the means by which good is to be done. The promotion of the temporal welfare of the poor and wretched, and also the diffusion of knowledge and piety and spiritual comfort among men, requires money; and Christians, as stewards of God's bounty, as champions of his cause, and as the friends of his creatures, must contribute of their substance towards these great and urgent ends.

By the phrase "forget not" they are warned against neglecting to "do good and to communicate." And there is need for such a caution. Selfishness, want of benevolence, a failure to realize the miseries of the world, a false idea that modern poor-laws adequately overtake the destitution of the people, and a similarly false idea that it belongs exclusively to the office-bearers of the Church to look after the spiritual welfare of the multitude around, lead many to neglect "to do good and to communicate."

These acts of duty are here called "sacrifices." It is understood, when this name is given them, that they are rendered to God himself. True, they directly and immediately refer to men. But, as performed by be-

lievers, they are done in submission to Divine authority and for the promotion of the Divine glory; and so *they*, as well as praise and thanksgiving, are described as “sacrifices.”

“With such sacrifices,” it is here affirmed, “God is well pleased.” And what a powerful reason for performing them is this! The fact of a certain course of conduct being well-pleasing to his earthly father is wont to prompt and encourage a dutiful child to follow it. And shall not the fact of “doing good and communicating” being well-pleasing to their Father in the heavens be felt by believers as a strong and becoming motive thus to act? In this case—though not always in the case of what gratifies a human parent—the fact that it is well-pleasing shows it to be right. And to present sacrifices well-pleasing to God associates a man with a noble fellowship—for example, with Abel, of whom it is said, “The Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering,” (Gen. iv. 4), and even—with caution and reverence be it said—with Him of whom it is written, “He hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour,” (Eph. v. 12).

17. *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*

The original word here rendered “them that have the rule over you” is the same that is rendered in the same way in ver. 7. It has a special reference to *guidance*. But ecclesiastical guides are invested with authority—not, indeed, arbitrary or despotic, but such as to vindicate and verify the idea of Church-government. Such

authority is indicated in the specification of obedience and submission as due to spiritual guides.

The word rendered "Obey" (πειθεσθε) has a peculiar relation to *doctrine*. That translated "submit yourselves" (υπεικνετε) denotes, or at least includes, willing subjection to discipline. Alike to the truth declared by Christ's ministers with *his* authority, and to the sentences fairly passed by the presbyters regularly met as the guides and guardians of his Church, the private members must practically and heartily submit; and contumacy in either case is not only an insult to the sacred offices which Christ has instituted, but rebellion against Christ himself.

Very solemn and striking are the considerations by which the sacred writer here enforces on the Christian Hebrews obedience and submission to their spiritual guides.

First of all, he says—"They watch for your souls." What a charge! To ministers, and other office-bearers of the Church, are committed "souls"—souls endowed by their Creator with large and varied powers—souls naturally sunk in sin, and by wicked works in arms against the government of Heaven—souls which must live on, whether they will or not, for ever and for aye—souls which are either hurrying, fast as time can carry them, towards hell, or ransomed by the blood, renewed by the Spirit, and destined to the glory, of the Lord. For these souls—it may be, a mighty multitude of such—the spiritual guides of a Christian congregation are called to "watch;" and this, if faithful, they will actually do—looking at the souls themselves, to trace, if possible, their moral state—looking at the dangers which compass those souls around, and seeking to

ward them off—looking at such appliances as may be suitable for the condition of the great and awful charge, and endeavouring to bring them skilfully and successfully to bear.

It is added—“as they that must give account.” The language, in the connection which it bears, implies that spiritual guides have an account to give, and intimates that such, if faithful, realize that fact, and are constrained by it to “watch for souls.” The account is partly present, and partly future. The men to whom the solemn responsibility here specified pertains have many a reckoning with God to make, amidst the duties of their calling, in reference to the spiritual state of the people of their charge; and although, at the day of doom, “every one must give account of *himself* to God,” yet those who have had the spiritual oversight of the souls of others shall have to render an account, on that decisive day, not only of themselves, but also of the people entrusted to their care.

The expression, “that they may do it with joy and not with grief,” indicates a definite end as aimed at by the spiritual guides described, in “watching for souls, as they that must give account.” Whether “grief” will be permitted to thrill the heart of any faithful minister of Christ when he stands, with his people, before the “great white throne” of judgment, it would probably be presumptuous to determine. In the paradisaical state of disembodied being, there will be unviolated peace; and in reference to the state of final glory it is said, Rev. xxi. 4, “There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.” But it is conceivable that, at the intermediate point when the great final reckoning is

made, even a ransomed and regenerate soul may be susceptible of something like passing grief for others, or even of passing fear for itself. But whatever there may be in this, (1.) Ministers, in reckoning with God respecting obstinate and disobedient souls, are now liable to emotions of "heaviness and sorrow"—such as St. Paul felt in reference to the unbelieving Jews, (Rom. ix. 2); (2.) Success in the ministry, and spiritual improvement on the part of the people, are well fitted to cheer and exhilarate the heart of a faithful servant of Christ—as is suggested by St. John, when he says, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth," (3 John 4); (3.) A satisfactory reckoning between ministers and people at the day of doom will be associated with profound and glorious gladness—as St. Paul suggests in those striking words, addressed to the Thessalonians:—"What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy," (1 Thess. ii. 19, 20).

It is added—"that," namely, the giving of the account with grief, "is unprofitable for you." In that case, the Eternal Father and the Mediatorial Son would be terribly displeased. To hear their own ministers reporting to the Judge the unbelief and wickedness of the people of their charge, will surely be fitted to shake the latter with horror and alarm; and then, the dreadful sentence will ensue, "Depart from me, ye cursed," (Matt. xxv. 41.)

What solemn considerations these! How monitory, alike to the office-bearers, and to the private members, of the Church! To "watch for souls, as they that must give account"—how incumbent on the one! To

“obey and submit themselves”—how incumbent on the other!

18. *Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.* 19. *But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.*

The exhortation to pray for the writer of this Epistle and other spiritual guides, was probably suggested by those views of their work and responsibilities which are set forth in ver. 17.

Intercessory prayer is frequently inculcated in the word of God. It is one of the most sacred bonds of the social commonwealth; and it is one of the means by which temporal and spiritual benefits are secured. Ministers and other office-bearers of the Church have a special claim on the intercessions of their people. Well might St. Paul say, “Pray for us.” The duties of ministers and their ecclesiastical associates—how arduous! Their responsibilities—how great! And as on the tone and character of *their* ministrations depends the welfare of their charge, the latter have urgent need, for their own sake, as well as for the sake of their religious overseers, to pray for them.

The consideration urged in the words, “We trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honourably” (*καλῶς*), is here held forth as an inducement to intercede for the spiritual overseers who could honestly and truly use the words. A speedy restoration to the Christian Hebrews of the kind and Divinely-qualified instructor who here addresses them was fitted to prove a comfort to *him* and a benefit to *them*; and accordingly he proposes such a restoration as an object

which might suitably prompt them to intercessions on his behalf. Having thus asked *them* to pray for *him*, *he* proceeds to pray for *them*.

20. *Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21. Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

This beautiful prayer, or benediction, may be considered as consisting of five parts.

I. The Being to whom it is addressed is called "The God of peace."

Peace is a lovely word. And O, if the Christian shall duly realize the horrors of that moral warfare which has taken possession of the earth, how gladly will he welcome the spiritual "peace" of which Jehovah is "the God!"

In the Christian salvation there is a threefold peace:—(1.) Peace between God and man; (2.) That "peace of God which passeth all understanding, and keepeth the heart and mind by Christ Jesus;" (3.) Social peace among men. Of this threefold peace Jehovah is "the God." He provided for it in his eternal plans; He secured it by the mission and mediation of his Son; and He bestows it by the application of his Gospel and the influences of his Spirit.

II. Christ is described by the names, "Our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep."

In respect of his true and eternal Deity, Christ is "King of kings." Even when he trode, in lowliness, the soil of earth, He was Israel's king. And now that



He has been exalted to his mediatorial throne in heaven, He is "head over all things to the Church," (Eph. i. 22).—And as Christ is "Lord," so He not only bears, but realizes and fulfils, the name of "Jesus." "Thou shalt call his name Jesus," said the angel of the Nativity, "for He shall save his people from their sins," (Matt. i. 21.)—This "Lord Jesus" believers appropriate and may claim as theirs—hence the language, "*our* Lord Jesus." He is theirs by an intimate, friendly, indissoluble bond—theirs in the character of "Lord"—theirs also in the character of "Jesus."

"The sheep" are those given by the Father to the Son, and brought by faith into a favourable and friendly relation to both. Of these Christ is the "Shepherd." He protects them by his power and guides them by his counsel. He leads them, for nourishment, "in the green pastures" of his word, his ordinances, and his providence. From "the river of life" He affords refreshment to their otherwise faint and thirsty souls. And—"wonder, O heavens, be astonished, O earth"—"the good Shepherd hath given his life for the sheep." Well may that Shepherd be called, not only "good," but "great." How great in his Divine Perfections! How great in his mediatorial Person! How great in the Offices He executes! How great in the way in which He executes them—nor least of all in the admirably wise, powerful, generous, faithful, and successful procedure He adopts as the "Shepherd of the sheep!"

III. "The God of peace" is said to have "brought again" this "great Shepherd from the dead by the blood of the everlasting covenant."

The resurrection of Christ is attributed in Scripture,

in one case, to the Father, in another, to the Holy Spirit, and in a third, to the Son himself. In this, as in the other departments of the Mediatorial work, all the three Persons of the Trinity conspire. It is to "the God of peace" that Christ's restoration from the dead is here attributed; and the former is said to have "brought again" the latter "by the blood of the everlasting covenant." The covenant meant is obviously that better dispensation on which, in this Epistle, the sacred writer descants so largely—the Christian Economy of grace and salvation. It is called "everlasting," in respect of the perpetuity of its duties, privileges, and general constitution, and is thus contradistinguished *from*, and contrasted *with*, the Economy of Moses. As on the Book of the latter, so also on the Book of the former, sacrificial "blood" has been sprinkled. As the one was ratified by the sacrifice of brute animals, so the other has been ratified by the sacrifice of God's eternal and incarnate Son. And through this sacrifice—through the life-blood of the Lamb—God is here represented as having "brought again" Jesus "from the dead." His resurrection was part of the recompence which, by his sufferings, He won; and his restoration from the dead had an intimate relation to the subsequent realization by sinners of the virtue of his death. He "was delivered," says St. Paul, "for our offences, and was raised again for our justification," (Rom. iv. 25.)

IV. The sacred writer asks that "the God of peace"—to whom he attributes the glorious and important work of "bringing again from the dead the Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep"—would "make" the Christian Hebrews "perfect"—fit, qualify, accomplish

them (*καταφύσας*)—"in every good work to do his will, working in them that which was well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ."

A noble and most desirable attainment this!—one for which Jesus gave himself in sacrifice—one by which God is glorified—one by which "the gospel is adorned"—one admirably fitted to promote the worth, dignity, and blessedness of him by whom it is secured. It is an attainment which must be sought in the use of means, but which it is for God himself to give. Well worthy is it to be followed after, alike by effort and by prayer.

V. In connection with the mention of "Jesus Christ," the doxology is introduced—"to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

The dignity of Christ's person, the tenderness of his love, the virtue of his sacrifice, and the grandeur of his salvation, all combine to enforce on us hearty and practical sympathy with the sacred writer, and with angels and the white-robed sons of immortality, in this ascription to the once crucified, but now exalted, "Shepherd of the sheep"—a "Shepherd," and yet himself a "Lamb"—erewhile a "Lamb slain," now "a Lamb in the midst of the throne."

22. *And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation ; for I have written a letter unto you in few words.*

23. *Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty ; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.* 24. *Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.* 25. *Grace be with you all. Amen.*

Of course, the "word of exhortation" is this horta-

tory and practical Epistle. As compared with most of the Epistles of the New Testament, it may seem long. The writer, however, calls it "a letter in few words." This he probably does in reference to the vastness and variety of the subject which, in so limited a compass, he has traversed. "A letter" so rich in saving doctrine and in practical counsel, well might the Christian Hebrews prize. Well might they "suffer," yea, cordially welcome and diligently apply, a "word of exhortation" so wise, so instructive, so affectionate, and so Divinely true.

The original word here rendered "set at liberty" (*ἀπολευμένον*) indicates that, by imprisonment or otherwise, Timothy had been confined. Very dear and intimate was St. Paul's intercourse with that devoted minister. What marvel if the apostle or a like-minded man rejoiced, and would have others to rejoice along with him, in such a friend's release, and in the prospect of being again associated with him in visiting those in whom they felt, in common, a kind and Christian interest?

"They of Italy salute you" does not absolutely prove that this Epistle was written in Rome, nor even that it was written in Italy. Italian companions might be with the writer elsewhere. Storr, in connection with his opinion that the Epistle was written in Corinth, supposes Aquila and Priscilla to be meant—individuals represented, Acts xviii. 1, 2, as having come from Italy to that city. There is nothing, however, in the original expression rendered "they of Italy" (*οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας*) which forbids it to be understood as meaning, *the Italians*, just as a like phrase, Acts xvii. 13, (*οἱ ἀπὸ Θεσσαλονίκης Ἰουδαῖοι*) means, *the Thessalonian Jews*. In this

view, it accords with the idea—strongly urged by Stuart—that the Epistle was sent from Rome.

The invocation “Grace be with you all” is in the true style and spirit of St. Paul. It may serve as a guide and model for ministers and Christian friends. And O, what a blessed thing it is to obtain saving grace from Heaven—grace to enlighten, grace to pardon, grace to sanctify, grace to strengthen, grace to comfort, grace to guide, and grace to glorify!

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